

Muhammad The Prophet

AN ESSAY

by

F. K. KHAN DURRANI, B.A.

Editor, The Eastern Times

Author of "The Great Prophet," etc. etc.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

ALLAMA A. YUSUF ALI

C.B.E., M.A., LL.M., LL.B., I.C.S. (Retd.)

می توانی ~~منکر~~ یزدان شدن
منکر از شان نبی نتوان شدن

"You might deny God, but it is
not possible to deny the great-
ness of Muhammad." —*Iqbal*

QAUMI KUTUB KHANA
65, RAILWAY ROAD - LAHORE

2nd Edition

1942

First Impression 1937
Second Impression September 1942

All rights reserved

Printed by Mirza Muhammad Sadiq at the Ripon Printing Press,
Bull Road, Lahore and published by M. N. Humayun
from Qaumi Kutub Khana, 65, Railway Road, Lahore

FOREWORD

A FOREWORD is neither a Preface nor a Review.

In the Preface the author unburdens himself as to his objects in writing his book, the methods which he has professed to follow, and any other personal matters which he thinks his readers ought to know. Mr. Durrani has done so in his Preface. The only point in his Preface on which I would remonstrate with him is where he says that he considers brevity as a defect of his Essay. I consider it a virtue.

Reviews are of two kinds, oracular and parasitic. The oracular reviewer has a lofty mind, far above the author he is reviewing. He condescends to say something about what the writer is writing about. But his chief mission is to proclaim what he is himself thinking about. He lays down the law, and is surprised that the undiscerning author did not follow it even before it was laid down ! The parasitic reviewer

FOREWORD

is also dogmatic. But his dogmatism is of a different colour. His chief mission in life is to curry favour. He will curry favour with the author or the publisher if there is something to be gained by it. He will curry favour with the public whom he caters for, if he can only discover the taste of that public. He will be quite ready to fling superlatives about, like a man firing a pom-pom gun. But if you expect him to weigh and consider, you have mistaken your man.

As writer of this Foreword I can honestly claim to be free from the temptations of a reviewer or the arduous and serious duties of a revealing Preface-writer. All that can be expected of me is that I should say a few friendly words, not unmixed with criticism, to launch this little book on its way to the public. In doing so, I shall be true to my principle that brevity is a virtue and not a defect.

May I say at once that there are many things in this Essay in which I do not agree with Mr. Durrani, but that I yet welcome his work as presenting a new point of view ? It is new only in the sense that our Indian Muslim

FOREWORD

writers do not usually see history or religion or politics from the same angle of vision as Mr. Durrani. They exaggerate the vices of the Arabs in order to throw into relief the stupendous reforms effected by Islam. Mr. Durrani exaggerates the virtues of the Arabs and makes light of their vices in order to show that Islam was not an Arab movement but a world movement. The object in either case is unexceptionable. But perhaps it can be attained better by less exaggeration and more detail.

Is it really true that "the worship of idols is a harmless folly," and that idolatry was dying out of Arabia and had died out of all neighbouring lands when Islam was born? No intelligent idol-worshipper, whether in India or in pagan Arabia, or even in Darkest Africa, thinks that the idol is a living thing. He worships it symbolically. But it is a folly all the same, because it implants false ideas of worship in the mind of the idol-worshipper. It is a deadly folly, because the false idea of worship means a false idea of God, and a false idea of God means a false idea of our own inner selves, of our relations to the world around us, and of our

FOREWORD

duties to our fellow-creatures. Idolatry is inextricably mixed up with polytheism, and Mr. Durrani himself points out in a beautiful passage (p. 67 *et seq.*), what a tremendous revolution in thought and life is involved in the doctrine of Unity as preached by Islam. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the Gospel of Unity sums up the whole truth in philosophy, ethics, and life, and that the ordinary attitude of mind, which treats *Tauhid* and *Islām* as synonymous, is right.

But are we justified in opposing this fundamental doctrine of Unity to a supposed Dualism which opposes Evil to Good? Long after abandoning the ancient Persian belief in an Ahriman that was constantly hampering the work of Ahura-Mazda, we must still consider Evil as an undoubted fact, and one against which we have constantly to fight in order to retain our footing in the territory of the Good and the True. The fault in Dualism or Polytheism is not that it recognizes two or more forces in cosmic life, but that it recognizes these two or more forces as if they were equal with or partners with the One True God. They are

FOREWORD

realities, but they are not to be erected into the same status as the One True God whom we worship.

It is somewhat inconsistent to lay chief stress on the character of the Holy Prophet as a patriot when his teaching was not for one country or nation, but for all humanity. I am sorry, therefore, that I cannot follow the argument which ascribes all our present ills to "the absence of a national purpose". Mr. Durrani's discussion of the subject leads him to some indiscreet remarks about Indian politics, which should find no place in the serene atmosphere in which we consider the real work done by the Holy Prophet as an historical character.

I cordially agree with the author's remarks about the true conception of womanhood in human society. His young and wholesome enthusiasm has enabled him to see the inwardness of true love. He might have gone further and developed the theme of earthly and heavenly love, and shown the thread of unity between them. But perhaps his fear of a charge of Romanticism has led him to restrict the sphere of woman to that of a wife or mother and

FOREWORD

to deny her any other vocation in life.

But I must not forget my ideal of brevity.

gladly act as an introducer of this book to the public, and hope that it may receive that critical appreciation which it deserves.

SIMLA,

September 4, 1935.

A. YUSUF ALI.

PREFACE

MUHAMMAD the Prophet of Islam (on whom be peace) was a diamond with many facets, cut by the Creator's own hand. From whichever facet viewed, he was great beyond measure. This book is a study of just a few of those facets.

"Lives" of the Prophet there are many, and, big or small, they almost all run on the same lines. They differ only in more or less of detail, and when one has read a few of them, one begins to wonder whether there is nothing in the life of the Prophet beyond accounts of battles and persecutions and some few anecdotes which please the fancy of the pious, but often leave the critical reader agape. One cannot see the woods for the trees, and the person of the world's greatest and most eloquent and thoughtful teacher is lost in a multitude of unmeaning details. Muslim writers have made absolutely no progress in this behalf and still follow the lines laid down by the first biographer of the Holy Prophet, Ibn Hisham, twelve centuries ago. They still

PREFACE

use dates for chapter-headings. And the cheap pamphlets that are distributed every year in India by the thousand also do not seem to know anything beyond dates and events and naturally fall flat. They never make any stir in the country. Instead of doing any good, the writers have only injured the cause of Islam, because when year after year the same stuff is retailed, the readers, especially non-Muslim readers, are bound to conclude, consciously or unconsciously, that there was really nothing much in the Prophet.

Educated Muslims in this country, or indeed in any country, do not now read books on Islam, nor do they place such books in the hands of their children, and there are heaps and heaps of young men and young women to-day, in fact a very large majority of those who come out of our schools and colleges every year, who are completely ignorant of the teachings of Islam. It is because people are despairing of Islam, because the same stuff is dished up over and over again under different names and has exhausted their patience, because they have come to think that books cannot teach them anything beyond what

PREFACE

they already know. To-day it is difficult to get together an audience to listen to a lecture on Islam, and even in schools and colleges they try to rake up interest under the name of the Prophet. But how long? I am afraid the day is not far when the fate which has befallen books on the religion of Islam will also overtake the "Lives" of the Prophet. It will be a bad day for Islam, but the responsibility for it shall lie on those writers, who go on writing in the terminology of a bygone age and leave the present untouched, and on the publishers and the societies which retail their writings.

The Muslim world is face to face with a thousand problems. The claim is frequently made that the Quran contains a solution for all our ills, that the Prophet can guide us out of our difficulties. But I have not seen this claim made good anywhere by any writer. The question has yet to be answered, and if the reader will kindly excuse me the vanity of the large claim, I make bold to say that the present writer, with the exception of one other, is the only one who has thought over the subject deeply and for many years and can answer it.

PREFACE

There are individuals and societies in this country that are interested in the propagation of Islam and spend much money on distributing free literature. To them I will say: You look on the Prophet with the eye of faith, whereas the non-Muslim, to whom you desire to reach out the message of Islam, as well as the Muslim who has had the modern education, looks on him with a critical eye. Before you can arouse faith in him, you must convince his reason. Books which please the believers may fall far short of pleasing them. No doubt, many books have come into the market of late years, which claim to have been written for that purpose. Their failure, however, bears sufficient testimony to the fact that their writers were not competent to write on the subject. To my knowledge, with the sole exception of Amir Ali's expensive *Spirit of Islam*, not a single book has been written that could meet the demand. Even the tone of that book is unfortunately apologetic, especially in the 'life'.

Disappointed with the current literature and realizing that the Prophet is still the most powerful propagator of his faith, I thought

PREFACE

many years ago of writing his life. But before long I realized that such a book in order to keep within reasonable bounds shall have to be prefaced by two other volumes on an exhaustive study of the Quran and the Hadis, not from the historical or juristic standpoints which alone have engaged the Muslim writers so far, but from the ethico-sociological standpoint, for which the modern world is crying and which has never yet been touched. The work is large and requires much leisure. But it is not difficult for the Musalmans to make it possible for me to undertake it. India is a large country and contains eight crore Musalmans. If the well-to-do among them make a generous response to the present publication and broadcast it throughout the country, they will do much to serve the cause they hold so dear as well as enable me to produce the work which I wish to.

The present essay breaks wholly new ground. It has one defect of which I am perfectly aware, *viz.*, its brevity. I have been able to keep it within its present compass by excluding a host of subjects which come crowding upon me when I open the Quran or a book of Hadis. Still I

PREFACE

believe I have pointed out the lines fairly clearly along which a life of the Prophet ought to be written, and in accordance with which I intend to produce the proposed work. The booklet will also enable the Musalmans to judge whether I am competent to undertake the work and it is up to them to make its execution possible. In the meantime, I hope, they will find a more living picture of the Founder of Islam in the following pages than any they have had before. They will also find that the Prophet of Islam was a much greater man than we thought him to be.

In the end I beg to tender my grateful thanks to Mr. Yusuf Ali for kindly furnishing the book with a Foreword, although I must confess I do not agree in the strictures contained therein.

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
1. <i>His Place in World History</i> . . .	1
2. <i>As a Patriot</i>	13
3. <i>The Man</i>	57
4. <i>His Work</i>	115
5. <i>His Conception of Womanhood</i> . . .	139
6. <i>Appendix</i>	157

•

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET
HIS PLACE IN WORLD HISTORY

•

CHAPTER I.

HIS PLACE IN WORLD HISTORY

What is corruption and what is righteousness? Life is a stream, ever flowing, ever in flux. When water stops in a hollow, it becomes stagnant and corrupt. To keep clean and sweet it must keep flowing. And when a man sits down to enjoy the fruits of his labour and falls into ease and luxury, his energies begin to stagnate, his stamina weakens, his powers fail, he declines and becomes corrupt. To remain healthy, physically, mentally and morally, he must go on striving, striving and toiling and building ceaselessly and tirelessly he must go on, because the moment he stops he perishes. For life means striving and toiling and ceaseless endeavour. Active endeavour is righteousness. When active endeavour ceases, even good customs corrupt the world, as an English poet once said.

As it is with individuals, so is it with nations.

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

As the panorama of world-history unfolds itself before our eyes, we see the river of life beginning in a tiny trickle away in the mists of the hoary past beyond our ken, broadening and deepening and gathering force as it flows down the centuries to our own times. But its flow has not been smooth and unchecked; there have been periods in its long career, when it has stopped in pools of stagnant waters, full of stench and corruption, until some great upheaval in men's affairs stirs it and the river of life goes thundering down again in a headlong race through a span of several centuries. We see a nation rise suddenly from obscurity. It builds upon foundations laid by its predecessor and reaching a certain stage of cultural development stops building further. It flourishes for a season and enjoys the fruits of its labours, until ease and luxury sap its powers and it declines and falls to rise no more, handing as it goes its message of culture and civilization along with the sceptre to its successor. The same drama of the rise and fall of nations plays itself out on the world's stage again and again.

The labours of archaeologists have pushed

HIS PLACE IN WORLD HISTORY

back the bounds of our knowledge of man's cultural history to about the middle of the fourth millennium before the Christian era, to the Sumerian civilization that flourished on the fertile soil of Mesopotamia about 3500 B. C. From the valley of the Euphrates the light of civilization spread to India in the east and to Syria and Egypt in the west. From Egypt it travelled to Greece, which in its turn carried cultural developments to such a height that the Greeks became in time teachers of their own teachers. Greece as the home of civilization perished and Rome stepped into her place. This brings us to the beginnings of the Christian era. In the first quarter of the fourth century A. C. Constantine parted from Rome and founded the Eastern Empire ; a century and a half later the Western Empire was overwhelmed by the hordes of Northern barbarians, and Europe sank into the profound sleep of the Middle Ages.

But before that event took place, another power had entered the arena of European politics, namely, the Christian Church. During the first three centuries of its history, Christianity was an obscure sect, one of the

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

numerous mystery religions which were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. But whereas the churches of the other mystery religions each formed a separate and independent entity without having any affiliation with others of the same cult, the Christian Church formed one closely-knit international organisation, and it was by virtue of this organisation and through its capacity for borrowing, adapting and assimilating the doctrines and practices of others that it came ultimately to prevail over all its rivals. For it should be remembered that Christian dogmas and the church ritual were yet in the making and the way was open for borrowing and assimilating the dogmas and rites of other faiths.

In the first quarter of the fourth century the process of absorption and assimilation crystallized at last into a formula of faith which is known after the name of its author St. Athanasius of Alexandria. By that time the Church had entered into a close alliance with the political power of the Empire, and by the will of the Emperor the formula of faith enunciated by St. Athanasius became the orthodox faith of

HIS PLACE IN WORLD HISTORY

whole Christendom. Thenceforward the cross and the sword went hand in hand. All rival doctrines of Christianity itself and all rival religions of the Roman world were suppressed by fire and sword, and Christianity was made the sole religion of Europe, Western Asia and North Africa. The schools of philosophy and learning, the heritage of ancient Greece, were closed, the scholars dispersed and the teachers persecuted, banished or massacred, and learning, which was thenceforth confined to the study of the Bible and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, was driven into cloisters and made the monopoly of the Church. And so it remained to the day when the mind of Europe awoke again, deposed Christianity from the power it had usurped over the intellect of man and ushered in what European historians term the Modern Age. As long as Christianity held undisputed sway over Europe, the continent remained sunk in the night of ignorance and barbarism and when awakening came at last, her pace on the path of progress was proportioned by her liberation from the toils of Christianity and its superstitions.

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

But that is another part of the story. The fact to be noted here is only this that from the time Christianity assumed the reins of political power and spiritual leadership in Europe and Western Asia to the day of its deposition and fall from that power, Europe did not create a single idea of any worth in any branch of human thought or activity nor took a single step along the path of progress. In fact, Christianity did everything in its power to suppress creative thought of every description and did it successfully, burning at the stake every one who dared to think for himself. Life in Christendom during the Middle Ages, also very appropriately called the Dark Ages, was at a standstill, and what was true of Europe before the Renaissance, was, before Islam, true of the whole world. The minds of Persia, India and China were sunk in a profound sleep and had produced nothing of value for many centuries. The waters of life had become stagnant and corrupt in the East as well as in the West. "Corruption prevailed over land and sea" before Islam, as the Holy Quran (XXX, 41) puts it. The world was waiting for

HIS PLACE IN WORLD HISTORY

some great upheaval, for a violent shaking that should wake it up from the lethargy of ages and start it again along the path of culture and enlightenment and progress. In the phraseology of the Quran, the earth was dead. It wanted a new infusion of blood, a new inspiration, a new ideal and a new message that should bring it to life again. That infusion of fresh blood, that new inspiration and that new message came by Islam from Arabia by the hand of—MUHAMMAD (peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him).

To the student of history it is immaterial whether the Great Prophet was conscious that the task which lay before him was nothing short of the regeneration of the whole world or whether he was working only as an unconscious instrument in the hands of the forces of history. The question is of importance, however, to the biographer of the Prophet. The Quran, which is admitted by friend and foe alike to be the most reliable authority for the actions and intentions of the Holy Prophet, claims repeatedly that he was the conscious agent of world reformation. I shall come back to this question in the next

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

chapter. Here it is enough to emphasise from the standpoint of the student of history that all progress in learning, culture and civilization from the seventh century to the present times owes itself directly or indirectly to the mind of the Founder of Islam. The old world had been dead for ages before Islam. Babel and Nineveh lay buried under the sands. Egypt stood in bondage to Rome, and Greek, Persian and Indian minds had been sunk in sleep for centuries. With Muhammad (ﷺ) the world took a new birth, and from his day to the rise of the modern civilization of Europe, for the space of more than a thousand years, Muslim lands were the only civilized lands on the face of the earth and Muslims the sole torch-bearers of light and learning. Rays of light proceeded from Muslim countries to enlighten the darkness of non-Muslim lands. Students from all over Europe flocked to the Muslim universities of Spain, where they imbibed the habits of systematic scientific thought and research, and it was these students who prepared the mind of Europe for revolt against Christianity and for progress in science, learning and the arts of

HIS PLACE IN WORLD HISTORY

civilization. Before Islam there was a gap of many centuries in the history of civilization, but from the birth of Muhammad (ﷺ) till to-day its course has been unbroken and the progress continuous.

This is the place of Muhammad (on whom be peace) in the cultural history of mankind. He is the Father of the Modern Age, the Founder of the New World, the Second Adam from whom mankind had its spiritual birth. Of his place in the history of the world's religious thought I shall speak later.

AS A PATRIOT

CHAPTER II.

AS A PATRIOT

Muslim writers of our times in this country love to paint the pre-Islamic Arabs as black as they can in order to heighten the colours of the reformation brought about by Muhammad (on whom be peace). The practice is unscientific as well as detrimental to the cause it is intended to serve, because praise based upon falsehood does little credit to its recipient. Also, it deflects our vision from the true purpose of the Prophet's advent and gives us a false conception of the teachings of the religion he preached, a conception which is responsible for most of our ills in India to-day.

The charge-sheet against pre-Islamic Arabs usually contains the items of adultery, drink, gambling, worship of idols, absence of belief in the hereafter, belief in demons and evil spirits, divisions of the tribes and want of a national government and the helpless state of the orphan.

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

and the widow. To the student of history, these items of vice, with the exception of the last two, are of minor importance, and if these were all the vices known to ancient Arabia, it was a very fine country indeed, and did not stand in need of any prophet. And if the mission of the Prophet consisted in the reform of these vices only, he was only a minor prophet.

Wine, woman and games of chance hurt only individuals and the families dependent upon those individuals. Their effect on the prosperity and strength of a nation is only indirect and I do not know of any nation in the world's history which was brought to ruin by any or all of these evils. In respect of these evils, I believe, the Musalmans of India compare favourably with every other nation excepting the Turks, and yet it is also a fact that they stand lower than any other people in the world to-day. It has come to be so, because for ages we have been laying all the emphasis we could on these vices and their opposite virtues to the entire neglect of those vices and virtues upon which depends the prosperity and power of nations.

AS A PATRIOT

Lying, indolence and infidelity to one's covenants and engagements are vices of sweeping moment. Indolence destroys the stamina of individuals and nations and brings every possible vice and corruption in its train. The economic prosperity of a nation depends entirely on its credit, on the mutual trust and confidence of its members and the confidence other nations have in its truth and honesty. Society cannot stand if its members have no confidence in one another's integrity, and other nations will not trust us if we are not true to our engagements. Lying and infidelity to one's covenants shake the social confidence to its foundations and destroy the very basis upon which society stands. Remember, therefore, that when you tell a lie or break a promise wantonly, you are laying the axe to the very roots of your society and your nation.

Nor was Arabia any way specially distinguished above other nations for the vices of drink, adultery and gambling. Had they been the prime evils of Arab society, or had the Prophet regarded his mission to consist solely in the reform of these private vices, he would have attacked them with his characteristic fervour as

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

soon as he became conscious of his mission. But the fact stands that the portions of the Quran revealed during the Meccan period observe complete silence over these vices and reform in this behalf came after the Emigration, at Medina. And I take this circumstance for an evidence that these vices were not the distinguishing features of Arab society in pre-Islamic times. If Arabs had been so debauched as they are said to have been, they could not have been so brave and so healthy and strong as they were

Of course, only a perverted mind will deduce from what I have said above that I am trying to lend my sanction to these vices. Gambling is a silly practice, very dangerous to the families of those who indulge in it. Drink turns one into a beast while the effect is on, and impairs the intellect and health, weakens the will and ruins the moral stamina permanently, while adultery makes one gross and shameless, and if carried to excess ruins the health and endangers the well-being of the family of the person who indulges in it. And neither a drunkard nor an adulterer can make any spiritual progress. I only mean that these are not the only vices for-

AS A PATRIOT

bidden by Islam. There are other vices of far greater moment, upon which our preachers observe eternal silence, but which cut at the very roots of our collective life. I also mean that the religion preached by our Holy Prophet did not consist of a bundle of negations only. It also contained much of positive value. Chastity and abstention from drink and gambling are but passive virtues, the practice of which does not entitle one to be called good and noble. Don'ts cannot carry one far. To be good and noble one must also learn a few Do's and act upon them, for it is only by active endeavour to achieve something positive that we can maintain our own moral and physical health and add to the strength and prosperity of the nation we belong to.

To return to our subject. Prostitution, gambling and drink were not the distinguishing vices of the Arabs. Prostitution prevailed far more extensively in the Greco-Roman world, the doctrine of community of women was openly taught and practised in Persia, while temple prostitution, which had ceased to exist in Mesopotamia and Syria, existed in India from

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

immemorial past and has continued to exist to our own day. In this country, the people, from princes down to the common farmers, dedicated their virgin daughters to the service of the temples and the service generally took the form of prostitution and no shame was attached to intercourse with these vestal virgins. In fact, the thing was looked upon as honourable and as an act of piety. Gambling was the national pastime of Vedic Aryans and has always had the sanction of religion behind it. Nor was drink a peculiarly Arab vice. The Arabs imported their wines from foreign lands, and drinking orgies had prevailed in foreign countries from very ancient times and had in places, as in ancient Greece and later in the whole of Christendom, become part of the religious ritual.

The general position of woman in society was not worse in Arabia than it was in other countries. Woman was regarded as a chattel and was denied the right of inheritance in all countries, and nowhere in the world has the position of the widow been so bad as it has been in India and continues to be to this day. And what is true of the widow is also true of the

AS A PATRIOT

orphan. Belief in demons and evil spirits is characteristic of all primitive peoples and has been nowhere so wide-spread and held with such tenacity as in India and China. In India it dates from before the Aryan settlement and continues to be the common faith of the people to this day.

Absence of faith in the hereafter, however disquieting to the religious doctrinaire, has little interest for the student of cultural history, and if a nation is morally sound otherwise, the absence of the belief does not do much harm. And, conversely, if a people is morally unsound, belief in the hereafter would not make it any better. No truly righteous man acts righteously from hope and fear of rewards and punishments in the hereafter. The righteous act righteously from their own inner urge, from an inner moral necessity, which does not look for rewards nor is even aware of punishments coming later in the event of acting otherwise.

The truth of my statement can be verified any day by reference to the beliefs and practices of the people around us. You will find them very staunch in their belief in the

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

hereafter as in the other articles of faith, but you will meet with very rare persons among them who have the fear of God truly in their hearts. The vast majority you will find to consist of those who tell lies without shame, who slander their fellows without cause, who cheat and defraud one another as the normal business of their lives, who oppress the poor, deceive the unwary, break their promises and cheat the world in the name of God and His Apostle and who practise every abomination on earth and yet strut about as being very good Musalmans having very correct beliefs! The preacher and the layman, the great divine who writes commentaries on the Quran and the Hadis, says long prayers, preaches long sermons and writes books on Islam, and the illiterate ignoramus are all in the same boat. In fact, you will find the ignoramus a better Musalman and more godfearing in practical life than his scholarly brother. Why is it so? It is because good morals depend less on the soundness of one's religious beliefs than on the soundness of one's training at home and in school. Moral training is almost

AS A PATRIOT

extinct from the homes of Indian Musalmans of the present generation, while our schools are busy producing a godless race of characterless boys and impudent girls. They are concerned with only helping their scholars to pass examinations. As if examinations and certificates had any value in the lives of nations or in the management of homes!

Meanwhile, it disposes of another "vice" of the ancient Arabs, *viz.*, their illiteracy. Education in those days was the privilege only of the priests and upper classes all over the world, and illiteracy was the lot of the common people in Arabia as elsewhere. Nor is illiteracy any moral wrong. Literacy may give one advantage in earning one's bread in certain forms of society, but it certainly does not make one morally better. For education or development of the mental powers of a man is quite a different thing from the training and discipline of his moral instincts

The worship of idols is a harmless folly, and the idols of wood and stone worshipped by ancient Arabs were not half so dangerous as those deadly idols of greed and avarice, vanity

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

and pride, self-will, the insatiable desire for praise, honours and titles, and the like, which modern Musalmans, including religious preachers, carry in their breasts. It is an historical fact noted by every modern Orientalist that at the time of the advent of the Prophet of Islam idolatry was dying a natural death and Arabs had ceased to have any great love for their idols. Idolatry had died out of all neighbouring lands, it could not long survive in Arabia, and the determined opposition of the Meccans to the Islamic reform was not due to any strong attachment on their part to the idols of the Kaaba. The opposition was due rather to the instinct of self-preservation of vested interests, to the fear of the Meccans that if the Islamic revolution succeeded, their prosperity, which depended upon the Kaaba's being the centre of Arab pilgrimage, and their hegemony over the tribes as being guardians of the Kaaba would be gone. When they at last realised that instead of hurting their interests the revolution brought positive advantages with it, made life and property secure for all and added to the peace and prosperity of the country, the Arabs abandoned idolatry so completely as

AS A PATRIOT

if idols and their worship had never been known among them, and we see a man like Abu Sufian, the high priest of Meccan idolatry who had fought the Prophet tooth and nail for twenty years, breaking the idol Al-Lat of Taif with his own hands without a qualm within a few weeks of his conversion to Islam !

If there was a country in the world calling for reform in this behalf more loudly than any other, it was India, where the worship of idols had gone deep into the grain of the national character, where temples had become the repositories of national culture, power and wealth, where idolatry continued to exist in all its vigour for centuries later and where it exists to this day. Indeed, all those vices, which are said to have prevailed in pre-Islamic Arabia and which the Founder of Islam is believed to have been deputed by God to reform, existed in India to a thousand times greater extent than they did in Arabia, and if a prophet was needed more urgently than anywhere else for the reform of private morals and religious cults, it was in India. But God does not seem to have cared the least bit and instead of raising a prophet

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

in India He raised one in far-off Arabia. I conclude, therefore, that the real object of the advent of Muhammad (ﷺ) was something different from what it is generally supposed to have been, and we need not blacken the pre-Islamic Arabs in order to value the work the Prophet performed.

In truth, the Arabs were not so black as they are painted and whatever vices they had, they were more than counterbalanced by their virtues. Those stalwart sons of the desert were a brave and dauntless race worthy of their desert home. Their manly bearing, their unflinching courage, their fearless deportment in moments of peril, their unwavering eyes and steady hearts raised them far above their neighbours in sheer manliness. When an Arab rode forth into his desert with his trusty sword by his side he went fearless like a lion, prepared to hack his way through the midst of enemies or die, for those dare-devil sons of the Arabian desert had no fear of death and played with it as a young bride plays with her glove. In truth, their sins were the natural offspring of superabundant energy, the outflow of an exuberant manhood, rather than the weak

AS A PATRIOT

contemptible vices of a soft and degenerate race. The vision of the Arab was as keen and clear as that of the ancient Roman or the modern Englishman. They were a straight-thinking folk, their commonsense, which in Kipling's phrase is 'better than knowledge', was remarkably sound and they had neither the taste nor the understanding for those metaphysical abstractions, beloved of the Persian and the Indian, which have little value in practical morality and no application in our day-to-day life, however clever they may be.

The intellectual perspicacity of the race can be gauged from the remains of their poetry. Their literary talents, their power of comprehension and expression of thought, were developed to a remarkable degree, and it speaks much for the culture and refinement of their sense of the exalted and the beautiful in letters that they saw in the verses of the Quran such perfection and such a miracle of the literary art as to call them "sheer enchantment."

The Arabs were a large-hearted people. Being men of violence who saw no wrong in

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

robbery, they looked upon low cunning with uttermost contempt. In fact, the plain honest robber is always a better man, because he is more manly and more outspoken in his intentions and dealings than that shopkeeper or businessman who cheats his fellows with low cunning by making false declarations of his intentions, and that religious hypocrite who makes religion his stock in trade and cheats his victims in the name of God and His Apostle.

The Arabs were a chivalrous people and no Arab ever raised his hand to strike a woman. Tribe made war upon tribe and strife and bloodshed filled the normal course of Arab life, but women were always spared. No doubt, Arabs sometimes buried their unwanted infant daughters alive as did the proud Rajputs of India, and a step-mother formed part of the heir's portion. He could marry her himself or give her away in marriage to another for a consideration. In a primitive and poverty-stricken society like that of Arabia it could not be counted for any great evil. In a rough country where one could maintain oneself only by the strength of one's right arm and

AS A PATRIOT

which had no industries by which women could maintain themselves, the arrangement was not so bad as it might look to those of a more advanced age. And primitive communities have done worse things than that. Egypt and Persia, both cradles of ancient civilizations, permitted the marriages of brothers and sisters, the latter, if memory does not fail me, even permitting fathers to marry their own daughters, while in the days of Biblical kings the marriages of half-brothers and half-sisters were allowed, and the shameful practice of polyandry prevails to this day in Tibet, Ladakh and among certain communities in Southern India. I have reason to believe, and those who care may take up the history of Europe and Asia to test the truth of my statement, that, at the time of which we are speaking, woman was more honoured in Arabia than anywhere else in the world. The proud manhood of Arabia is a sufficient guarantee of the fact, because only good and proud women can bear a race of proud and noble men, while low, despised and down-trodden women will produce only a mean and contemptible race. Arab women

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

accompanied their men to fields of battle and sent their husbands, brothers and sons to war and death or victory by their songs of fire and passion. Such women could not be the daughters of a mean race nor could such men be the offspring of despised women. Arab valour would have been impossible without Arabia's heroic women, and it is a fact of history that chivalry with all its beautiful mannerisms was born on the soil of Arabia before Islam.

All the world has heard of the Arab's unfailing hospitality. One could go to one's deadliest foe, even to the man whose brother or son or some other near relative one had killed and who was bound by ties of blood to avenge the blood of the victim,—one could go even to such a foe and hold the ropes of his tent to be welcomed as a guest and treated with courtesy and honour and unstinted hospitality. Ceaseless strife and warfare between the tribes, the poverty and barrenness of the soil and the extraordinary value which these two circumstances had bestowed upon the life of the individual had made this code of hospitality obligatory upon all. And the

AS A PATRIOT

code was unique, known to the Arabs alone. In the laudatory poems which have come down to us, whether addressed to individuals or to tribes, three virtues stand out above all others and form the object of unending praise, namely, valour, hospitality and loyalty—loyalty to one's kindred, one's tribe and one's plighted word. It was these virtues alone which, in the eyes of the ancient Arabs, bestowed distinction and honour upon individual chiefs or upon their tribes.

Each tribe was a separate entity and the individual enjoyed his social rights and privileges within the bounds of his tribe alone. The tribe was responsible for the protection of its members against their enemies. If an Arab was killed by a member of another tribe, his whole tribe was bound to avenge the murder and they would know no rest until the revenge was taken. Any member of the tribe could give the protection of his tribe to one who was not a member of the tribe, and the tribe accepted the responsibility. It would protect the adopted member against his enemies in every way, even if it had to go to

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

war for that purpose. The Arabs never broke their word and their sense of honour required that they should give protection to the man who asked for it. In return for these privileges the individual merged his person and his interests entirely in those of the tribe. Everybody in this country seems to be willing to sell his community or his country for a title or a post, but among the unbelieving Arabs of the Days of Ignorance such black sheep were not to be found. The Arab's loyalty to his tribe was unshakable and above every other sentiment. His first thought was ever for his tribe, and even for his personal triumphs he would claim the credit not for himself but for his tribe. The reader will remember in this connection the young man who, when he killed the Persian commander during the Perso-Arab war in the reign of Omar the Great, exclaimed : "I have killed the Persian commander. I belong to the Bani Taghlib." This strong attachment and devotion to the name and interests of one's tribe was the sole guarantee of the strength and prosperity of the tribe and, in an ultimate analysis, of the

AS A PATRIOT

individual himself, and deserves every praise of those who think nationally.

One item in the charge-sheet of the ancient Arabs I have not mentioned so far, *viz.*, the disunion and mutual strife of the tribes. But could not this disunion be removed by another than a prophet? Sivaji created a nation out of a herd of despised people and he was not a prophet. Ranjit Singh welded the Sikhs into a mighty kingdom and he too was not a prophet. And instances of such nation-builders who were not prophets could be multiplied by the score.

Behold! I have demolished bit by bit the whole accepted picture of pre-Islamic Arabia and the notion of the supposed mission of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) based upon it, and it is time to build a new one. I have shown above that the religious, moral and political conditions which prevailed in Arabia in the 7th Century did not call for the advent of a prophet, least of all for that of the greatest prophet the world has known, and whatever work of political unification needed doing at all could be done by another than a

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

prophet, as it was done before and after him in other countries. What was then the mission of Muhammad (on whom be peace) ?

The difficulties in our attempts to understand the mission of the Great Prophet arise from the fact that, habituated as we are to thinking nationally, in studying his life we restrict our view to the immediate scene of his labours, *viz.*, Arabia, and when we see the welter of chaos and disorder, which was Arabia before Islam, giving place under his hand to a united and mighty nation, we are dazzled by the contrast and inquire no further. All these difficulties disappear, however, the moment we begin to think internationally and to look upon Arabia as no more than a square on the vast chess-board of the earth. Muhammad (ﷺ) was not the "Prophet of Arabia," but the Prophet of the whole world. His advent marks the dawn of a new era. The old world was dead, it had been dead for many centuries before him, while the race of progress started by him continues unbroken to this day. He stands at the head of the modern age and is its great progenitor. The fact is so patent and marked so strongly

upon the face of history that it is not possible to deny it. Nation had risen after nation before him, made its contribution to the world's culture and civilization, and declined and perished. It was now the turn of Arabia, and Arabia, inspired and disciplined by her noblest son, accepted the challenge and assumed the duty of being the guide and teacher of humanity.

This is the logic of events. We have now to see what the Prophet himself conceived his mission to be and whether he considered himself to be the Prophet of the Arabs alone or of the whole world.

When we look back on the religious history of mankind, we do not find a single teacher who had as clear a conception of the task before him as the Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had. Buddha had no conception of culture and civilization or of the collective life of man and addressed himself to the individual, isolated and detached from all around him, an eternal and everlasting entity which must work out its *nirvana* or extinction by withdrawing itself utterly from that collective life which the

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

student of cultural history presumes to value so much. Indeed, no religion born on the soil of India could teach otherwise, the atmosphere here being too saturated as it has always been with the doctrines of *karma* and transmigration. In fact, the proposition holds good with regard to all philosophic faiths, whether born in India, Persia, Greece or elsewhere, because they all addressed themselves to man as an isolated individual and not as a social being. Moses was a nation-builder and concerned himself exclusively with the Israelites. Jesus, the last of the Jewish prophets, declared in very plain terms that he had come unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel alone and was not prepared to throw his pearls before dogs and swine, by which he meant the non-Jewish races. Muhammad (ﷺ) alone of all the divine teachers addressed himself to the whole of mankind individually as well as collectively.

It is a fact known to every student of psychology that one plans as largely as one conceives and fixes the goal of one's ambitions as far as the range of one's vision extends. This is especially true of the founders of

AS A PATRIOT

religions. In remote antiquity the gods were always tribal. When tribes became nations, the god of the successful tribe became the supreme deity of the nation. Before Islam the conception of God in almost all religions was national. It is in the Quran alone that we find God defined for the first time in the history of the world's religious thought as "the Lord of all the worlds," "the Lord of all men," "the Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything there is in them," "the Lord of the Easts and Lord of the Wests." Muhammad's conception of the universe is vast and very far-reaching; his range of vision is almost infinite, limitless. He believes in the essential unity of the human race (II, 213 and several other passages in the Quran). He believes that mankind is one family, all descended from the same prime ancestor and he considers himself divinely appointed to remove those differences which separated nation from nation and unite them all into one vast brotherhood. Is it possible that a man who conceives so vastly, who believes that mankind is but one family and

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

that God Who has sent him to be a teacher to men is the Lord equally of all races and all nations, should deliberately confine his vision and his mission as a teacher to only one small portion of the whole? Only those will think so, who are ignorant of the psychology of great teachers. The fact that the Prophet of Islam conceived of God as the Lord of the whole universe, of the East as well as of the West, and of the whole of mankind as being one family, is a sufficiently convincing evidence that he considered himself called to be the teacher of all races and all nations and looked upon the whole world as his parish. But the Quran does not stop at telling us of the Prophet's conceptions from which we might draw our own conclusions with regard to the extent of his mission. It goes on to tell us in the plainest possible terms that Muhammad (ﷺ) is a reminder and a warner to all men and all nations (VI, 91 ; VII, 158 ; XXV, 1—2 ; XXXIV, 28; LXVIII, 52; LXXXI, 27). Corruption prevailed in all the world (XXX, 41) and it was naturally his business to remove it, because he was the first to discover it. The Prophet

AS A PATRIOT

once declared that the whole earth had been made a mosque for him and that he had been raised for all mankind.

Some people might imagine that the Prophet enlarged his vision to embrace the whole world because, after he had conquered the whole of Arabia and converted it to his faith, the country appeared too small for his ambition and he widened out the scope of his mission to include other countries as well. This is the usual contention of Christian controversialists, but has no basis in fact, because the passages quoted above were, one and all, revealed during that early period of his ministry at Mecca, when the Prophet was fighting singly against overwhelming odds, when the mother-city had resolved to put a violent end to his endeavours and when, despised and powerless as the teacher was, no human eye could see into the mists of the future and nobody, excepting the teacher himself and his small band of devoted followers, had any idea that the Prophet or his message would survive the persecutions and barbarities of Mecca. There is only one verse, the one which points

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

to the divine mission of the Arab race itself, which was revealed at Medina. It reads: "We have made you an exalted nation that you may be the bearers of witness to all men as the Prophet is the bearer of witness to you" (II, 143). The verse bears out my contention abundantly that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) worked as a conscious agent of world-rejuvenation from the very beginning of his career, that his eyes were focussed on the world-theatre from the very dawn of his ministry, that he was the world-teacher and not merely the Prophet of Arabia, and that his work in Arabia consisted primarily in preparing the race to carry his message to the four corners of the earth.

We have already noticed the great virtues of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Manly and heroic, those splendid barbarians, fresh from the lap of nature and unspoilt by any civilization, were just the kind of raw material the world-spirit chooses to replace the old and decrepit forms of society by more vigorous ones. More than once the Arabs had given proof of their cultural capacity. About 3000 B. C. they had displaced the

AS A PATRIOT

Sumerians from the valley of the Euphrates and built up a splendid civilization on the ruins of the preceding one. About the same time they had occupied the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea and built up a vast sea-borne trade with Europe and North Africa. Arab kingdoms had flourished from ancient times in Asir, Yemen and Hadramaut, and Arabs remained the carriers of the nations on land and sea in the east as well as in the west until the first century of the Christian era. But the trade had dwindled, the kingdoms had perished and for many centuries before Islam the Arabs had been in a hopeless condition. Yemen had been conquered by the Abyssinians, from whom it was taken over by the Persians. The Persians had also annexed the Arab kingdom of Heera in Mesopotamia and taken possession of all the fertile tracts on the eastern coast. The Ghassanide kingdom in southern Syria was annexed by the Emperor of Byzantium and Christianity went on percolating among the northern Arab tribes through the influence of the Empire. The Persian Empire and the Roman Empire were always at war with each other ; Arabia lay on

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

their flanks; Arab tribes of the north were drawn into service by the Persians and the Romans to fight their wars and the trend of their imperial policies was to divide Arabia between themselves. The fertile lands of the east and the south had already fallen into the hands of the Persians. The Romans were pushing from the north and rumours of a Roman invasion disturbed the peace of the newly-founded Arab kingdom of Medina ever and anon throughout the life of the Prophet.

While the two imperial neighbours of Arabia were thus aiming to reduce her to thralldom, the Arabs were hopelessly divided among themselves. There was no central authority and no government in the land. The people were divided into a multitude of tribes and the tribes were ever ready to plunge into war at the slightest provocation. Want of political cohesion had reduced that splendid race to a position of abjectness and contempt in the eyes of their neighbours, and there is no doubt that if Muhammad (ﷺ) had not been born for another fifty years, the imperial policies of Persia and Byzantium would have triumphed, Arabia would have come under

AS A PATRIOT

the heels of the foreigners and the Arabs reduced to slavery for ever. The task of national unification and of maintaining the freedom of the country in the face of two mighty empires was, indeed, of a stupendous magnitude, enough to quail the heart of any patriot. But to the genius of Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) it was but a side issue, a mere preliminary step to the attainment of a grander aim, and he accomplished it with such thoroughness that not only the tribes were united into one body, but the two Empires also lay shattered at the feet of his followers within a few years after his death.

What the Prophet taught, to what discipline he subjected his people and what methods he employed to achieve his object I shall discuss in a later chapter. Here I am concerned only with the results and the general spirit of his political re-construction. Arabia at the time of his advent was a seething cauldron of unrest and disorders. Tribe made war upon tribe ; excepting the four sacred months warfare was almost ceaseless ; the conscience of the country held robbery and plunder to be legitimate means of livelihood, and neither life nor property was

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

secure. Under these circumstances, if a man, Muhammad (ﷺ) or any one else, had gathered a force of stalwarts around him, beaten the tribes into subjection one after the other and established peace and a strong government in the country, his name would have gone down in history as that of a great statesman and patriot, and succeeding generations would have venerated his memory as that of their greatest benefactor. The question of offensive or defensive wars does not arise in such cases, as it is always better to take the offensive and establish peace when the country is torn by mutual strife and warfare than let the disorderly elements make life intolerable. Had the Prophet been merely a political leader and had his vision been bounded by the frontiers of his own country, he would quite possibly have adopted the same course and with perfect justification.

But he did not and the fact that he did not shows that he had no liking for methods of violence and that his aim was not merely the political resuscitation of his own country. A kingdom founded on violence might have perished by violence. It would have fallen

AS A PATRIOT

asunder as soon as the strong hand of the founder or of his immediate successors had been removed by death and the country would have drifted back to its erstwhile savagery. He chose rather the slow and peaceful method, the method which also happened to be the most radical. Instead of imposing laws upon his people from above and having them obeyed by the power of the sword, the Prophet seeks to effect a revolution in the hearts of the people. He seeks so to purify their natures and so to discipline their individual wills that the conscience of each should become a law to him and each should shun evil and choose the right, not from fear of the police or the military, but from his own inner urge. For thirteen years he struggles at Mecca, a helpless and hopeless struggle. For thirteen long and weary years! What patience and what superhuman powers of endurance! We grow impatient because the government does not yield to us when we have passed a wordy resolution. But Muhammad (ﷺ) fought a losing battle for thirteen long years and would not give up. Daily he faced the derision and ridicule of his

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

fellow townsmen and daily he rose with fresh courage and a fresh hope and fought on. In the day he hears abuse and sarcasm and meets with every form of maltreatment and persecution, and the nights he spends on his feet, praying for mercy and guidance for his persecutors, for it pains him grievously that his fellow countrymen would not accept the water of life that he is holding out to them. For thirteen weary years he goes on knocking at the stony hearts of Mecca and finds them shut. Yet he does not despair.

He shifts the centre of his activities to a distant place and we suddenly find ourselves face to face with another aspect of his extraordinary genius. He enters Medina as the chief of a small republic and amazes us with his remarkable political sagacity, his far-sightedness and prudence and the untiring energy he puts forth to secure and strengthen his little charge. Expedition upon expedition he sends forth to make offensive and defensive alliances with the neighbouring tribes or conclude treaties of neutrality with them in case of war. And when at last he is called upon to draw the sword, he

AS A PATRIOT

does not shirk the responsibility and boldly accepts the challenge.

No one had a clearer conception of the far-reaching importance of the Battle of Badr than the Holy Prophet. The numbers engaged were small, about one thousand persons on one side and a little above three hundred on the other. But the issues were large, of world-wide importance, for that brief engagement on the battle-field of Badr was to decide in what course the history of the world would run in future. Perhaps no single battle in the world's annals has so deeply affected the destiny of the human race as the Battle of Badr, because the victory of Islam on that day opened a new era in the history of civilization. Before the battle began the Prophet prayed, "My Lord, if the Muslims perish to-day, none will be left on the earth to worship Thee hereafter," pointing out thereby the issues of world-wide importance that hung by that battle as well as the historic significance of his own mission. The heroes of Islam who participated in the battle were granted special privileges and honours later on and the Holy Prophet once declared that God

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

Almighty had forgiven all their sins. Realising that the future triumph of Islam depended upon his victory whilst defeat spelt death to his cause, he staked his all, even to the last available man, on the issue of that single battle and — won. And Arabia awoke to the realisation that the humble and persecuted teacher who had been mocked and stoned and driven from home to seek asylum among strangers was a military genius to be reckoned with.

The Prophet was a wide-awake statesman. He kept a close watch upon all movements in the country and nothing escaped his notice. Through his proselytising activities and by persuasion he went on bringing tribe after tribe into the national union. Sometimes the treaties were purely political, the Prophet not insisting on conversion to the faith, because he felt sure that the leaven would work and the pagan tribes would embrace the faith without much delay, which happened invariably. Great strength of character was needed in dealing with the recalcitrants. Besides pagan Arabs, there were Christians and Jews in the land. In spite of the difference of faith, Christians

AS A PATRIOT

could fit in with the life of the Arabs without any difficulty. As a matter of fact, throughout their history, Muslims and Christians have always been able to pull on together amicably and even at times to form joint governments, as in Poland and Jugoslavia today. But it was different with the Jews, who were as exclusive as the Hindus and, as Wellhausen points out, could not fit in with Arab life. They believed themselves to be the favourite sons of God and looked upon the rest of humanity as their field of exploitation. In their habits and customs, their ways of thought and their low cunning, they were poles apart from the manly and straightforward Arabs. The Prophet treated them with marked courtesy and included them in the political community of Medina on a footing of equality with Muslim and non-Muslim Arabs. But their intrigues and conspiracies were a constant menace to the peace and security of the infant commonwealth, and as the situation would not improve otherwise, two of their tribes had to be banished one after the other, and the third, which was guilty of high treason in time of war, perished by the sword.

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

Nor was the Holy Prophet oblivious of his foreign neighbours. When the Truce of Hudaibia restored peace in the land and gave the Holy Prophet respite from war, he sent letters to foreign potentates and invited them to Islam. One of them, Shurahbeel bin Amr, the Ghassanide chief of Bostra in Syria and a vassal of the Roman Emperor, who had become a Christian, put the Holy Prophet's messenger to death. The murder of an ambassador is a most serious offence; it was an affront to the sovereign people of Arabia and could not be tolerated. The Prophet at once dispatched a force of 3,000 strong to avenge the insult and vindicate the honour of the nation. Two years later the Holy Prophet led the last and greatest military expedition of his life. News had come that the Roman Emperor was advancing with a large force to invade Arabia. The Prophet decided to stem the tide of invasion beyond his own frontiers, and in spite of drought and famine and excessively hot weather and his own declining years led in person a force of 30,000 strong and went forth to meet the enemy. To preserve the integrity and uphold the honour of

AS A PATRIOT

the nation he was not afraid to meet the greatest military power of the day on the field of battle.

Persian domination in the eastern and southern provinces of Arabia was also put to an end and the whole country was brought under one flag. The seemingly impossible had been accomplished and the Arabs were united into one nation. But it was a nation inspired with a high ideal. A nation has been defined as a geographical and racial entity united against all the world. But the nation which Muhammad (ﷺ) had called into being was united not *against* but *for* all the world. It had been formed with one aim, that of service to the world, and thoroughly trained and disciplined to that end. The Prophet had given high proof of his statesmanship and patriotism. But his statesmanship was not concerned with seeking markets and spheres of influence in foreign lands, nor was his patriotism centred in his own home. He was a patriot with world-embracing sympathies. We are living in the 20th century which boasts much of its culture and enlightenment; but the world has not pro-

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

duced a single patriot to this day, who could feel the same love and sympathy for other peoples as he does for his own, as the Founder of Islam did. As a patriot with world-wide sympathies, Muhammad (ﷺ) stands alone in the history of mankind. The subsequent history of the Arab race shows how well he had done his work.

The Great Prophet passed away and the geographical and historical forces which had been gathering momentum since long before Islam came to a head. War broke out with Persia and the Eastern Roman Empire all at once. Nations had conquered foreign countries before Islam and have conquered since, but the conquests of Islam were unique. Plunder and spoliation, territorial acquisition and exploitation of subject races are the usual motives of all conquests. The conquests of Islam alone had the sanction of a moral purpose behind them. The conquest of one nation by another is always a calamity and the worst misfortune that can befall any people. The destruction of life and property that accompanies conquests is always large, but the loss is small in com-

parison with the yoke of slavery that is placed upon the necks of the subject people. Foreign rule reduces the subject race to something infra-human ; it may not destroy the body, but it certainly destroys the soul of the people, as it is doing in India to-day. But Islamic conquests were of a different nature. They brought greater freedom to the subject peoples than they had enjoyed ever before. They were conquests of liberation as in Persia, Syria, Egypt and India, rather than of enslavement. By the laws of Islam the conquests were interpreted as mutual contracts between the conquerors and the conquered, protection on one side and payment of taxes on the other with complete freedom of religion and social usages. On one occasion, when the conquerors felt that they could not perform their part of the contract and could not guarantee protection to the people of whom they had received the taxes, they refunded the taxes to the people with apologies and withdrew. This is a unique instance of political honesty and justice in the whole history of mankind. It was the spirit of Muhammad (ﷺ) working in those

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

conquerors, for, be it remembered, the men who dealt with the conquered peoples with such fairness, justice and humanity were those very men who, before Muhammad (ﷺ) had inspired them with his ennobling ideals and subjected them to his stern discipline of virtue, right-dealing and self-command, had been but a race of robbers and plunderers and savage cut-throats. Carl Becker, in his *Islam Studien*, calls the Arab conquests a *Völkerwanderung*, the sweeping onrush of a migrating people. But history fails to give even one instance of a migrating people, or even of a civilized conqueror, who dealt with the conquered peoples with half as much sympathy and humanity, moderation, forbearance and self-restraint as shown by the Arabs.

When the work of conquest was over and the conquerors settled down, they unearthed the treasures of learning of the ancients, of Greece and far-off India, translated them into their own language and set out to improve upon and add to the knowledge of the sciences they had received from antiquity. Education was free and open to all in Muslim lands,

AS A PATRIOT

because there was no priestly class to make a monopoly of learning as they had done in other countries. Muslim schools and colleges were open to Muslim and non-Muslim, the citizen of the country and the foreigner alike, where all scholars, of whatever country, race or religion, received their education, food, clothes and lodging free. Students from all over Europe came to study at the Muslim universities of Spain and carried back with them those seeds of learning which were later to germinate and enrich the soil of Europe. Indeed, the Arab race honourably discharged the debt which destiny or its place in history had put upon its shoulders. They carried the message of Islam and the torch of light and learning and civilization to the East and the West, and only those peoples who shut their doors in the face of the humanizing mission of the Arabs remained sunk in ignorance and barbarism for centuries to come.

This was the work of Muhammad the Patriot. Unlike other patriots whose love stops at the borders of their own countries, Muhammad's love embraced the whole world and he spent his whole lifetime, a life full of the most

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

strenuous labours and constant toil, in bringing up a race for the service of mankind, the whole of which he regarded as his family. May peace and the blessings of Allah be upon the Great Patriot.

THE MAN

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN

Let us now make a brief acquaintance with the man himself and try to know the thoughts he thought and the habits and manners of his life.

The idea of God is the central conception of all religions and we make our start with it. Dr. Archer says in his *Mystical Elements in Mohammad*: "The idea itself of Allah is the fruit of this man's gigantic effort, it is his unique achievement There was nothing among the Arabs as such—his own kindred—which could help him much in the formulation of his conception of God. What a tremendous stride, therefore, for one Arab to make!" It is true, but falls far short of the full reality.

The Prophet was illiterate, and even if he had been able to read and write, it could not have helped him much, because one cannot find.

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

God in books. He comes only through personal realisation by the seeker. Books are dumb until the heart itself has awakened and learnt to speak. You can "borrow" sciences, you can borrow everything that is born of the intellect alone, but you cannot borrow literature and art, because these are born of the heart, of personal experience. There is no plagiarism in philosophy, a German thinker has said, least of all there is one of the higher truths of religion. These come by personal realisation only, by personal experience and you cannot borrow or steal another's experience. And one cannot speak with the authority with which Muhammad (ﷺ) spoke unless one knows the length and breadth and depth and height of what one teaches by personal experience, personal realisation, so personal indeed, that it should run through the warp and woof of one's entire being.

Also, the conceptions of God and religion which the Prophet taught and which distinguish Islam from every other faith were not known to the world before Muhammad (ﷺ). What was there to borrow and from whom? Statements are sometimes made by irresponsible

THE MAN

persons that what the Founder of Islam taught was the same thing that had been taught before him by other divine teachers of antiquity and that he taught nothing new. The statement is historically untrue and comes from a loose interpretation of the Quran. The Holy Book says about itself : **فِيهَا كُتِبَ قِيمَةٌ** (xcviii, 3)—“All the firm ordinances are in it.” It is absurd to base the contention upon this verse, because it does not bear that signification. It only means that all those truths and teachings in older religions which were of permanent value and were worth preserving are preserved in the Quran. But it certainly does not mean that nothing new has been added to them. All other references in the Quran must be interpreted in the light of this verse because it is the clearest pronouncement on the subject.

The Old Testament conception of God is that of a national deity. The post-Exilic Judaism made some progress, but the Jews still remained His favourite children and their creed remains the same to this day: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord thy God is One God.” Christianity has not yet been able to free itself from its mystical

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

conundrum of three in one, while the Christianity of the seventh century frankly worshipped three gods. In fact, one could worship any number of gods in those days without shame. India had arrived at the idea of divine unity, but the Hindus were so addicted to philosophical abstractions that they had reduced Him to a cipher, to a useless nonentity, and handed over the administration of the universe to those two formidable antagonists, matter and soul, which are hopelessly divided against each other and can never agree. The Hindu mind revels in classifications and making pairs of "opposites." The Persians invented the devil and lent him to Christianity, which keeps him to this day as its most precious theological ally. The ridiculous fellow is always painted black, but is strong and wiry, well-proportioned, very handsome indeed, excepting for the horns of which, however, he seems to be wholly unconscious. His inventors believed in a dualistic world divided between the powers of light and virtue and the powers of darkness and evil. The philosophic thought of Greece, too, was never able to overcome this dualistic conception of the

THE MAN

universe and stopped at the apparent opposition and antagonism of matter and spirit. And Christianity, on its ethico-philosophic side, is but a product of Zoroastrian and Greek thought, while its ritual is only another version of the cult of Dionyseus Bacchus.

The dualistic conceptions of the universe prevalent before Islam gave birth to a system of morals which obtains to this day in the West and in India and has even taken possession of the vast majority of the Musalmans at least in the latter country. Dualism represents that nature is a duality instead of being a unity, that there are two forces in nature, the forces of good and the forces of evil, represented by spirit or the soul and matter respectively, which are ever working in antagonism to each other. The two forces are ever at war in the human breast. The soul aspires towards God and struggles for emancipation and release—for its salvation, while matter or flesh seeks to force it down and keep it entangled in its own toils. Therefore, all desires that arise from the flesh are sinful and evil, and virtue consists in the suppression of those desires, suppression of the flesh. Anger,

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

pride, desire for revenge, lust for pleasures that only seem to feed the body, passion for women and desires and appetites of the like kind were considered to be the offspring of the flesh and were denounced as sinful and devilish. They were the snares which the devil had invented to enslave mankind. Christianity went so far as to declare that connection with woman as such, no matter whether in or out of wedlock, was sinful and defiled man (see the *Revelations* of John the Divine, XIV, 4). With the horror of hell and the devil before their eyes, early Fathers of the Church exhausted their vocabulary of abuse and anathema upon womankind and hurled epithets on the sex which it seems indecent to repeat to-day. On one occasion, a council of bishops hotly disputed whether woman had a soul at all. They decided at length that she had one, but on the day of resurrection she would rise as a sexless being. Dualists as they were in their conceptions, it was the sex they hated most. But the sons of Adam could not be happy without the daughters of Eve and the race could not continue without their co-operation. Therefore a half-hearted concession was

THE MAN

made in favour of marriage, as an evil necessity, celibacy being still adjudged the higher form of life.

The theory of dualism, which is closely related to the doctrines of election and predestination, finds a most illuminating exposition in a dictum of Martin Luther who once said in his characteristically blunt manner that human will was a riding horse; when God rode upon it, it went as God desired it to go, and when the devil rode upon it, it went as the devil wanted it to go. Dualistic faiths were of necessity fatalistic faiths. They could not be otherwise.

The Hindus proceeded along a different line. They declared on the one hand that woman had no individuality of her own. She could not give herself in marriage to any man and there was no hereafter for her. In this life she remained the chattel and shadow of her husband, and in the hereafter she was absorbed in the essence of her husband. On the other hand, the higher philosophic minds declared that one should go about the business of marriage coldly and brutally, without desire and without attachment, do it with

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

the body alone, keeping the precious soul unsoiled by any sexual enjoyment or attachment. The Hindus, too, regarded celibacy as the higher form of life.

Indeed, asceticism and celibacy are the characteristic marks of all dualistic faiths. They condemn all those things that make for a rich and abundant life and exalt those that suppress the body and its inclinations and thereby impoverish the soul. For the doctrine of the interdependence of body and soul was unknown to dualistic faiths. Hence we see orders of monks and nuns in Europe and hosts of *sadhus* and renunciates in India. Christendom has practised mortification of the flesh much in her day, while in India we still see people with bodies dried and distorted and twisted into all fantastic shapes. They are those who have been trying to exalt their souls by mortifying their bodies and have succeeded only in making themselves horrors. In dualistic religions, it is a great virtue to emaciate the body.

It was to a world of such thoughts and practices that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) came. He taught a doctrine of divine unity

THE MAN

which threw the dualistic philosophy and ethics of the ancients overboard and instituted in its place a system of morality the significance of which the modern age has only now begun to grasp. On the numerical side the Islamic formula of faith banished all national and tribal deities and declared that there is *no* god—but One. Such an exact definition of the oneness of the Divine Being with its sweeping negation of all else that men had ever worshipped under the name of God had never been attempted before Muhammad (ﷺ) and is the exclusive possession of Islam. Indeed, the Quran declared that there was no room for any other deity because Allah is the Lord of all the worlds, to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and Whose dominion is infinite. On the philosophical side, the Prophet taught that God is essentially and indivisibly one, that unity of the Divine Being meant unity in nature, unity of human nature as well as in the world outside, and that despite all apparent diversities and antagonisms and oppositions the same law governed the whole universe, in the external world as well as in the

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

bosom of man. He declared that God is the Lord of light as well as of darkness (VI, 1), that He is the Lord of laughter as well as of tears (LIII, 43). Perhaps there is no bolder and no more drastic pronouncement on the unity of the Divine Being and of nature, in and outside man, to be found anywhere than the one contained in the following verses of the Holy Quran: "Consider the soul and Him who made it perfect, then breathed into it its sin and its piety. Happy indeed is he who purifies it and sorrow will indeed be his portion who corrupts it" (XCI, 7—10).

I am adopting a translation of these verses, which many Musalmans would not accept, and I do so because it is literal. The other rendering, *viz.*, 'He intimated to it by inspiration its sin and its righteousness' appears to me to be out of place, because the soul's being aware of the good and the evil of its actions does not lay any logical obligation upon it to choose the good and shun the evil. The stress in verse 8 lies on the word *alhamā*. If it referred to the soul's awareness only, the next two verses ought to have stated the soul's duty with reference to

THE MAN

that knowledge. The soul therein should have been in the nominative, whereas it continues to be in the accusative, the subject in both being the man himself. If the soul were originally pure, pure in the sense of being without any inherent capacity for sin, necessity of its purification and fear of corruption could not arise. Necessity and fear arise only when we realise that the soul is potentially capable of both purification and corruption. I, therefore, conclude that the word *alhama* refers not to the soul's knowledge of the good and evil of its actions, but to its inherent capacity for both. The suggestion of intimation or awareness comes from the pietist's fear lest God should be held the author of evil. The fear is groundless and misplaced because, as a matter of fact, God is as much the author of evil as of good, and there is no such thing as a personal devil, a sort of a co-equal being with God, though of black complexion, who is supposed to be working in eternal opposition to the Divine will and, seemingly, with great success. I am quite aware of the story of Adam and Satan's refusal to bow to him. But in matters of faith I cannot let an allegorical story take

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

the place of clear pronouncements. The verse means that the soul is inherently and potentially capable of both good and evil, that it was God who armed it with that capacity, that these two opposite characteristics of human nature are not the creation of two independent and mutually antagonistic powers but of one and the same Divine Being, that there is unity in nature and no duality, that God is one and not two. As the soul is potentially capable of both good and evil, man is warned in the next two verses that if he purifies it, he will be happy, and if he corrupts it, he will be in loss indeed.

The idea of the soul's being 'pure' in itself in the sense of being 'colourless' with an inherent capacity for both good and evil is beautifully expressed by Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal in the following quatrain of his *Piam-i-Mashriq*:

چہ گوئیم نکتہ زشت و نکوحیت
زباں لرز ز کہ معنی چیدار است
یروں از شاخ بینی خار و گل را
درون او نہ گل پیدا نہ خار است

THE MAN

“What is good and what is evil? What shall I say? The tongue trembles because the idea is intricate. Thou seest thorns and roses outside the twig. Inside it is neither rose nor thorn.”

I may say here at once what, according to my reading of the Holy Quran, is the relation of the soul to good and evil. Good and evil are certainly both from God but in the sense that the soul is created with an inherent capacity for both good and evil, equipped with the power of distinguishing good from evil with an urge to choose the former and eschew the latter. This will become clear from what follows.

The question of the authorship of evil has exercised the world's mind from very ancient times and the Quran answers it boldly that God Himself is the author of it. Such an exalted, almost ethereal, conception of the unity of the Divine Being and of human nature, which is so high indeed that the thought of it makes one giddy, is not known to any faith, ancient or modern, except Islam, and Muhammad (ﷺ) was the first to propound it. It should be remembered in this connection, however, that evil is to be

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

understood like time. The one is bound with the life of man as the other is bound with the earth. If the earth stopped revolving and the sun stopped rising and declining, time would die and give place to eternity. And the term 'evil', too, applies only to the human society, to the relationship of man to man. Considered apart from the world of man and his doings there is no such thing as evil. It is a condition of man's life and was created for the good of man. If there were no evil, man would become an automaton, a mere animal, incapable of any moral or material progress. Man is great, greater than the angels, because he is also capable of evil, because he is capable of battling with himself to suppress the evil in him and feed and strengthen the good. And it is this battling, this striving and constant endeavour that makes him good and great.

But this lofty conception of unity creates another difficulty. The dualistic faiths had a very simple ethics. All those actions which seemed to spring from the desires of the flesh were denounced as sins, while their opposites were labelled virtues, and the question of good

THE MAN

and evil was settled forthwith. But under the Islamic conception of unity the antagonism of matter and spirit disappears and good and evil both become predicates of the soul. How to distinguish one from the other then? What acts are we to call good and what acts bad? What is good and what is evil? The whole question is thrown into the melting pot.

The Holy Quran refuses to give any metaphysical definition of the two terms, and does so rightly because a metaphysical definition can have no use in our practical work-a-day life where every one, learned or ignorant, is called upon to decide questions of right and wrong on the spot. A metaphysical definition may or may not be of any use to a philosopher, but it can certainly be of no use to the average man. It may also be noted in passing that the science of ethics has not been able to give any reasonable definition of good and evil so far. After good and evil have been defined, there will arise the question of providing a motive force, an urge, to choose the former and shun the latter, because, as the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard has pointed out, the mere fact that a proposition is logically and

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

mathematically correct, is no reason why any one should act upon it. The urge to act must come from some other source. But the question goes beyond the scope of science or philosophy and has never been attempted. The Holy Quran, however, does give us practical indications of what is good and what is evil in a way that can be of use to all and, as we shall see later, supplies the necessary motive force as well.

In XXX, 30 we are told that religion is "the nature made by God in which He has made men. There is no altering of Allah's creation ; that is the right religion." A modern commentator* tells us under this verse that the Islamic principles of Divine unity, revelation and accountability for one's actions in the hereafter are recognised by all nations and are, therefore, part of human nature. The claim is, however, contradicted by facts because polytheists have always been more numerous than unitarians, revelation has never been a universal faith nor has belief in the hereafter been common to all mankind, and there have always been heaps of atheists, whereas the verse says that there is no

*Muhammad Ali in note 1937 of his English translation of the Holy Quran.

THE MAN

altering of Allah's creation, which means that there is no exception to the principle stated in it. We must, therefore, look for an element in human nature which is common to men of all races and all religions, to atheists as well as to believers in God, to the illiterate barbarian as well as to the cultured man of learning. That common element is the sense of right and wrong and all men possess the faculty without exception, though some choose one and some the other. The distinction is deep-rooted in human nature and the ways of good and evil are conspicuous, as the Quran puts it (XC, 10). The good is termed *almaruf* in the Quran, something well-known, while evil is sometimes termed inordinacy or rebellion, at times injustice, but more often it is called "exceeding the limits". The two phrases, "the limits of Allah" and "exceeding the limits", occur very frequently in the Quran. It means that good and bad are matters of degree and occasion and have no independent existence, that there is nothing absolutely good and nothing absolutely bad, that good and bad are relative and not intrinsic. The Lord has created nothing in vain, the

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

Quran assures us, and what is said of things is also true of acts. Absoluteness of values is a characteristic of dualistic faiths, while relativity of values is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of unity in nature and of the Divine Being as taught in the Holy Quran.

Let us illustrate our meaning with a few examples. Charity is a virtue, but if one gives away one's all in charity, reducing oneself and one's dependents to penury, one is a sinner. The ancients extolled poverty and decried riches, whereas the former is an unmitigated evil, a chronic disease against which society must wage ceaseless war, while the latter rightly employed can be a source of many blessings. Forgiveness is a virtue, but if one forgives because one is too indolent for taking vengeance or from some inherent weakness in character, one's forgiveness is not a virtue. And if a man forgives an habitual wrong-doer or one whom forgiveness would only make bolder for further wrongs, he is a sinner because by his forgiveness he spreads mischief and inordinacy in the earth. It is wrong to kill, but killing is a great virtue on the field of battle. Anger is bad, but at times it

THE MAN

indicates the possession of a high sense of honour. Prayer, fasting and other religious exercises are good, but if one gives oneself up wholly to these, one is a sinner because the family must be clothed and fed and one must add to the comfort and well-being of the nation. You may eat and drink, but over-feeding and under-feeding, unless it be from poverty or reasons of health, are both sinful. Peace must be kept, but you cannot keep it by remaining a pacifist. Sometimes you must take up the sword to establish peace. It is one's moral duty to cohabit with one's wife, but if you exceed the limits, give her no peace and impair her and your own health, you are a sinner. Chastity is a virtue, but if you go to the extreme of complete celibacy, why, you are a sinner. In short, it is the degree and the occasion which makes an action virtuous or otherwise, while the action itself as an expression of energy is quite colourless. You will notice from the above that some virtues which were given a supreme place in dualistic faiths are actually denounced as sins in Islam.

You will also notice that this doctrine of the relativity of moral values lays a heavy duty

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

on man. You must be alert, you must keep a close and constant watch upon your motives and actions, you must search and examine your heart ever and anon to keep it free from impurities. "Beware," says the Holy Prophet, "there is a piece of flesh in the body,—when it is healthy the whole body keeps healthy, but when it corrupts, the whole body becomes corrupt. Behold! It is the heart."

The question is often asked whether conscience is a sufficient guide under all circumstances. The Prophet was not the man and the Quran is not the book to have left this question unanswered. Conscience only distinguishes between right and wrong. It has to be cultivated and refined to be more alert and sound in its judgments. The individual conscience depends for its light upon the social conscience, and the social conscience should work for a progressive realisation of truth and a progressive conception of virtue, until a new humanity is born, a society of supermen, in which each person should be a law-giver unto himself. But conscience is useless without the discipline of the will, for it is will that makes the final choice

THE MAN

between right and wrong and decides upon a course of action. And the will must be fed and nourished and strengthened, and its freedom of action must be delimited by the provisions of positive law in order to prevent it from running riot and becoming licence. Hindu *dharma* contains many laws, but as those laws are based on other than ethical grounds, great Hindu teachers like Krishna in *Bhagavadgita* declared that salvation depended upon love or *bhakti* and not upon the works of the law. St. Paul denounced law as an instrument of spiritual death, because the Judaic law he had in view could only give birth to Pharisaism and that blind worship of the letter of the law which was the bane of Jewish society in the days of Jesus. But a bad law does not mean that there should be no law at all and the absence of a positive law in Christianity has always been a source of positive evil. For proof, one has only to refer to the moral condition of the lower orders of European populations and to the spirit of utter savagery and barbarism which takes possession of the peoples of Europe when they go to war with one another. The "freedom of

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

Christian conscience ", of which we hear sometimes, has not been of much good to the Christian peoples.

For the discipline of the conscience and the will a positive law is necessary. Every man cannot depend upon his own unaided judgment in all walks of life. He stands in need of positive laws for his personal guidance and discipline. And so we find a body of law in the Quran and the Hadis. Those laws are many and mighty, and so fundamental in their nature that they stand like immovable pillars for ages and ages to come. They are like the mighty steel frame of a skyscraper, the vacant spaces between the bars and girders of which are to be filled up by progressive legislation and decisions of conscience. But the living spirit of man must clothe the skeleton of the law with flesh and inform it with life. And lest the people should fall into blind worship of the law and cease to act in the spirit of those laws, the Quran, side by side with the enunciation of the laws, appeals to the conscience of man, appeals to him to fear God and commands him to think and ponder. For example, the reader may refer to the laws of

THE MAN

marriage and divorce and to the other passages dealing with man's relations to woman. He will find therein clear pronouncements of law on every subject. But the Revealer of the Quran knows that law in itself contains no motive for acting upon it. Therefore every pronouncement on law is followed by a moving appeal to man's conscience. "These are the limits of Allah, so do not overstep them." "Fear God — fear God in Whose name you take each other for man and wife," etc., etc. "Question your heart" whenever you are in doubt, commands the Holy Prophet.

From the above it will be seen that the spirit of Islam is the spirit of active endeavour, and herein again it differs from older faiths. Higher Hinduism holds up the ideal of *Ahinsa* or passivity and harmlessness, and Christianity teaches that one ought not to resist evil. If a man smites you on one cheek, turn to him the other also ; if he takes away your coat, give him your cloak also, and if he compels you to forced labour, do it willingly and do twice as much as he wants you to do. Happy are the poor in spirit, it says, and blessed are the hungry. The

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

Sermon on the Mount contains a long catalogue of pathetic pieties which indicate the true spirit of Christianity. But this kind of meek dumbness is repugnant to the spirit of Islam. Go and fight, commands the Quran. Fight the devil in your own bosom first and spare him not. Fight the evil in yourself and fight the evil outside, wherever and in whichever form you find it. Fight the devil of dirt and uncleanness in your surroundings, fight the devils of disease and poverty, fight malaria, fight plague, fight cholera, fight ignorance and illiteracy, fight the fat capitalist who defrauds and exploits the poor, fight the religious hypocrite who cheats the people under his cloak of piety, fight those who would deprive you of your birthright of free manhood and fight all those who sow evil and spread mischief in the land and who are the enemies of righteousness, for they are the enemies of God and Muhammad (ﷺ). This spirit of active endeavour and active striving, this battling with oneself and against the world at large in the cause of righteousness, this fight against evil in all its multitudinous forms, is called *Jihad* in the terminology of the Quran.

THE MAN

For *Jihad* is nothing but striving in the cause of righteousness against evil, whether the evil be in our own selves or in the world outside us. Its character and its weapons change with each form of evil it has to combat, but the spirit is the same, the spirit of the holy warrior. In modern language we call it the will to do right, the will striving to the end that righteousness should prevail and evil should be destroyed. And the Muslim is the holy warrior ; he is God's own soldier, who has been commissioned by God Almighty through His Apostle Muhammad to fight evil wherever and in whichever form he comes across it, and to battle with himself first and all along in order to prepare and strengthen himself for the great war of righteousness against evil.

To sum up, the doctrine of Divine Unity and unity in nature leads to the doctrine of Relativity in moral values as a necessary corollary, and the doctrine of Relativity leads in its turn, also as a necessary corollary, to the doctrine of *Jihad*, or active endeavour, which also embraces the law of conscience. These three doctrines, closely hanging one by the other

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

as they do*, were first taught to the world by Muhammad (ﷺ). They are the mark of distinction of the faith founded by him and its central pillars. They mark an advance upon the doctrines and practices of older faiths, which can only be called revolutionary. With him the older world of thought and belief disappears and a wholly new edifice is erected in its place. In this work of construction he is an originator and is not indebted to any. The world had been developing its religious thought for thousands of years in India, Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Greece. The progress was so slow that a religion does not seem to differ much from its predecessors, and the beliefs, symbols and the ritual of the religions of ancient Egypt and Western Asia may be seen preserved like mummies in the beliefs and ritual of Christianity to this day. A development of several thousand years. But the Founder of Islam covers the whole ground in one giant stride. He not only covers the ground of

* According to a report in Bukhari the Holy Prophet placed *Jihad* next to faith in God and himself.

THE MAN

countless centuries, but goes in that one stride a whole world ahead, demolishes the old and builds something entirely new and grand. This is the place of Muhammad in the history of the world's religious thought. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him.

Let us now study what he considered religion to be and what was his conception of righteousness. The religion he preaches consists of practical charity. It is not righteousness that you turn your face towards the east or the west. Righteousness consists rather in spending your substance to help your kindred and the orphan, the needy and the wayfarer and those who come to seek your assistance. It consists in freeing the captives, keeping up prayer and giving *zakat*, in the faithful performance of your engagements, patience in distress and firm resolve and perseverance in time of war. What is Islam? It is the distribution of food in times of famine and other natural calamities, feeding the orphan and extending your hand of succour to the poor man lying in the dust. What is Islam? It is that you enjoin one another to be patient and steadfast in times of hardship and

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

distress and show compassion towards your fellows. "Hast thou seen him who gives the lie to his faith? It is the man who drives away the orphan with harshness and shows no anxiety that the poor be fed" (CVII, 1—3). Service of your fellowmen and succour to the kindred, the needy, the wayfarer, the orphan and the widow is one of the principal themes of the Quran, to which it turns over and over again. "Every one of you is a shepherd and every one shall be questioned about his flock," says the Holy Prophet. "Beware! your lives and your properties and *your honour* are sacred and inviolate among you," and slander is listed as a punishable crime. "Do not speak of what you have no certain knowledge," says the Quran, (XVII, 36) "for your ears and eyes and hearts shall be questioned about it." "Your servants are your brothers," the Prophet taught, "whom God has made subject to you. Therefore feed them with the food that you yourselves eat, clothe them with the clothes that you wear and do not burden them with labours that may be beyond their capacity, and if you do so, share it with them." Do not envy except in two things: you

THE MAN

may envy the man whom God has given wealth and he spends it in the path of truth and charity, and you may envy the man who has been granted wisdom and knowledge and employs these gifts in giving sound and just judgments and teaches the same to others. The man who tells lies, the man who is faithless to his promises, the man who is dishonest in the discharge of his trusts and the man who, when he enters a dispute, espouses the cause of the unjust party—these are hypocrites and not true believers. Asceticism and hard religious exercises such as those performed by Hindu devotees are forbidden. When the Holy Prophet heard that a certain man fasted daily and spent his nights in prayer, he spoke to the man and said, “Your eyes will sink and your body will grow meagre and emaciated. Remember, your self has a right on you and your wife has a right on you. You may fast but you must also eat; you may say prayers at night, but you must also sleep.” Whatever you spend on the maintenance of your family, even to the extent of the morsel that you put in your wife’s mouth, it is an act of righteousness pleasing to God, provided it is done with good intention

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

and by way of *Jihad*. Behold the term *Jihad* applied to feeding one's wife and children! Inviting your friends to dinner and greeting one another when you meet on the way, removing thorns and obstacles from the public path and giving water to a thirsty dog are acts of faith and piety pleasing to God. What a broad conception of religion and righteousness! Social manners and mutual courtesies which tend to bring men closer to one another and establish good fellowship among them are declared part of religion. Indeed, Muhammad (ﷺ) brought religion from the heavens down to the earth and made it the religion of man, for the Islam he preached is a religion of love, sympathy and mutual service, the religion of kindness and fair dealing towards one's fellow beings and of compassion and mercy towards God's creatures.

Who is a Muslim? "It is the man from whose hands and tongue mankind is safe." "It is the man whose loves and hatreds are for God alone;" that is, a man should love another, not from any base motive, not from any desire or hope of personal gain and material profit, not from greed, but from the love of righteousness

THE MAN

which should be their common bond of friendship. And one must not hate or seek vengeance for personal wrongs from personal motives alone. One should do so only from public motives, for banishing evil from the earth and for establishing peace and righteousness, for serving the purposes of God and His Apostle alone. A Muslim is he whose love for Allah and Muhammad (ﷺ) exceeds every other love, that is, one who is willing to sacrifice every affection and inclination of his own to the cause which is dear to God and His Apostle. Muslims are those who are all love and mercy among themselves, but are exceedingly hard and unyielding in their battle against evil and evil-doers. "Be a brick," the modern scout-leader says. "The Muslims are like the bricks of an edifice, holding and supporting one another and maintaining the whole," the Holy Prophet explained. To the believer who has grasped the spirit of his religion by personal realization and is grown into it, faith is something sweet and delicious, something the taste of which his soul enjoys like sweet music or a rare delicacy, and not a burden that has been imposed upon him

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

by a higher authority. To such a one it is as hateful to commit wilful wrong—and wilful wrong amounts in the last analysis to unbelief and denial of God—as to be thrown into fire. Unbelief and transgression and disobedience become hateful to him (XLIX, 7). What is faith ? A companion of the Holy Prophet answers : “ It is that one should do justice against oneself in one’s own heart, greet all with affection and courtesy, and spend one’s substance in the service of others when one is oneself hard up.” The true believer who has the fear of God in his heart is ever afraid lest through inadvertence he should become the victim of impure motives. He is, therefore, ever watchful and ever searching and scrutinizing his heart. This fear is known only to the true believer ; the hypocrite is there very bold. “ The true believer,” another companion of the Holy Prophet says, “ stops at the thing that creates a doubt in his mind,” and the Holy Prophet says, “ The things permitted and the things forbidden are obvious, but between them lies a world of doubtful things, respecting which most people are unable to form sound judgments.

THE MAN

Therefore he who avoids doubtful things saves his faith as well as his honour, while the man who falls into doubtful things is like the herdsman who grazes his cattle so close to the edge of forbidden land that there is danger every moment of his cattle straying on to the forbidden land. Beware! Every king has a forbidden land and the forbidden land of God are the things which He has declared forbidden. Beware! In the body of man there is a piece of flesh; when it is sound the whole body remains sound, and when it corrupts, the whole body becomes corrupt. Behold! It is the heart."

Faith is not a constant quantity. "Faith increases and decreases," says the Holy Prophet, and you cannot buy salvation by lip-profession, by mere agreement to and acceptance of the truth of a proposition as an act of the intellect. Faith must be fed and nourished by practical righteousness so that it may keep alive and grow. The sense of shame is a mark of faith, and the sinner is a man who has no sense of shame, while the true believer, when he commits any wrong, feels ashamed in his own heart.

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

He feels demeaned and abased and robbed of honour and dignity in his own eyes, and feels grievous shame that he should have fallen so low from his high estate as to behave thus. The wrong-doer, however, who is not ashamed of himself when he does wrong, will feel no shame in the face of others. Habitual wickedness makes one brazen. The poet Akbar says :—

جس کو خدا کی شرم ہے وہ ہے بزرگ دین
دُنیا کی جس کو شرم ہے مردِ شریف ہے
جس کو کسی کی شرم نہ ہو اس کو کیا کہوں
فطرت کا وہ رذیل ہے دل کا کثیف ہے

“ He who is ashamed before God is a pious saint and he who is ashamed before men is a decent man. But what shall I say of him who is ashamed before none? Base in his nature and gross in mind - that is what he is.”

The pre-Islamic Arab's conception of morality was tribal, and he was ashamed of doing wrong only before the elders of his tribe. The Holy Prophet taught, “Be ashamed before

THE MAN

Allah as you are ashamed before your elders," leading his people thus from the known to the unknown (as the modern educational theory expresses it) and broadening the bounds of morality from the village to the whole world, as Wellhausen comments on the Saying.

You see the date-palm, the Prophet said, it never sheds its leaves. It resembles the Muslim, he declared. Commentators have been explaining this Saying to mean that as every part of the date-tree is useful, so a Muslim ought to make himself useful. That comes from intruding your own superior wisdom in the face of the express words of the Holy Prophet. There is hardly any tree, all parts of which are not useful. If we have not discovered the uses to-day, we might do it tomorrow. And the Quran tells us that God has created nothing in vain. The Saying points out in express words that the resemblance consists in the fact that the date-tree never sheds its leaves summer or winter. It means that the Muslim like the date-palm knows no winters, that in sorrow, affliction and distress his faith remains unshaken, that he stands firm like a rock in the face of all

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

calamities, that neither pleasure nor pain and neither success nor defeat can overwhelm him or lead him astray from the straight path which he as a Muslim has chosen for himself. The Muslim is patient in distress and steadfast in time of war, says the Quran. No difficulties and no hardships can make him despair. "Do not despair of the mercy of Allah," says the Quran. The ideal is the same as the one preached in the *Bhagavadgita*.

Such was the world of thought in which Muhammad (ﷺ) lived. Of course, what I have said above is very brief and the citations are few and chosen at random. If I were to attempt a full exposition of the richness and magnificence of the Prophet's mind, I would have to quote the whole of the Quran and the Hadis. But the space at my disposal is limited. We have learnt to know the kinds of thoughts he thought. Let us now see how he acted. Of course, here too we must be brief, and to know his ways and manners we must confine ourselves only to acts of a personal nature. It is well-known that whatever the Prophet taught, he himself acted upon it with uttermost scrupulousness,

THE MAN

because he was a teacher not merely by word of mouth but also by practice, and the Quran holds him up as the pattern and exemplar for all Muslims to follow. "You ask about the morals of the Prophet?" said Lady Aysha once, "go and read the Quran, for the Quran is the picture of his morals." Let us begin with his method of personal discipline and try to enter into the secret of his moral grandeur.

The secret is contained in the word *Istighfar*, which has been a stumbling block to many. The Holy Prophet is commanded twice in the Quran to do *istighfar* and on a third occasion he is assured that the prayer contained in the word would be granted. The word is commonly translated *to ask for forgiveness of sins*, and the Christian controversialist contends that if the Prophet is told to ask for forgiveness of sins, it means that he was not sinless and cannot, therefore, be taken for one's sure guide. Now sinlessness is an ideal for worms only, for those unfortunates who are 'poor in spirit,' as Jesus says in his Sermon on the Mount, and I am not going to waste another word on it. I prefer the mighty sinner

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

who will shake the spheres with his wrath, for he is a man at least. I would rather take up the more positive ideal of perfectness which also embraces the negative ideal of sinlessness.

In the Quran, XL, 55, the Prophet is told : "Therefore be patient ; surely the promise of Allah is true ; and do *istighfar* (i.e., ask protection) for thy shortcoming and celebrate the praise of thy Lord in the evening and the morning." The promise is of victory and final triumph and the Prophet is told that until the day comes, he must go on striving to remove any shortcomings that may be in his own self. The promise is repeated in XLVIII, 1-2, with such certainty of its early fulfilment that it is put in the past tense, as if the victory has already been achieved. The second verse explains that the victory has been granted in order that the Prophet's past and future shortcomings should be rectified. The idea, though expressed by another form of the same word, is, I think, different from the former. The shortcomings here are not of the Prophet's self, but of the world exterior to him. They mean things which were necessary to the completion of his mission and had yet to be

THE MAN

performed. In *sura* CX the victory comes in an overwhelming magnitude, and the Prophet is again told, "Therefore celebrate the praise of thy Lord and ask His forgiveness (or protection); surely He is oft-returning to mercy." The meaning is plain. The Prophet must not rest content with what he has achieved, but should go on striving for the perfection of his own inner self, and he is assured that such perfection shall be granted him because the Lord is gracious and kind. The word *istighfar*, therefore, comes to mean praying for inner perfection, and in the same sense it is used in XVII, 25 and LXVI, 8. In fact, on collating all the passages it appears that the Quran uses the word in its several forms only in the sense of praying for protection against the commission of sins or for inner perfection.

It may be asked, was not the Prophet perfect that he was praying for perfection? My answer is that it all depends upon what one understands by perfection. People seem to consider sins and virtues as if they were mathematically exact quantities, each one of which could be swallowed wholly and

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

completely at one gulp, whereas the man who has tried to live the life of the spirit knows by actual experience that every virtue and every sin is divided into an endless series of infinitesimal grades, so that nobody can claim that he has committed a sin or done a virtue to its ultimate perfection. A sin may be very sinful and a virtue very virtuous, and yet fall far short of ideal perfection.

And the man who claims that he has become perfect must be a very small man indeed. It means that his ambition was small, his vision was limited, he has attained to the uttermost height of his being, and has put a stop to further progress, there is nothing before him, no more to strive for, and in order to keep himself from going to the rot he must commit suicide immediately. For the stream of life cannot stop without becoming corrupt, and as long as one is in flesh and blood, if one does not want to decline and rot, one must go on striving and achieving and striving again. That is the law of life and that was also the case with the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). He was ever striving. When he had attained to one degree of

THE MAN

perfection, he suddenly became aware that there was a higher degree before him. And when he had achieved that, the vista opened again and he found that there were still higher grades to strive for. The range of his vision was unlimited, it extended as far as God Himself. "The goal is with thy Lord," says the Quran (LIII, 42). (Note the preposition *ila* in the original, which signifies *up to*). That was the Prophet's ideal of perfection. And one is as great as the range of one's vision. Only great men dream great dreams.

This was then the secret of Muhammad's greatness. He was ever doing *istighfar*, ever and anon retiring into himself, ever and anon taking account of what he had achieved and what he had yet to strive for, ever searching into his heart, ever examining and questioning himself, thus seeking to purify and perfect his light. He was not concerned with the apparent right and wrong only ; he had dived into the deepest depths of spiritual reality and sought to investigate all its hidden corners. And I swear by God that unless a man does *istighfar*, unless he retires into himself frequently and subjects

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

his actions and motives to a close scrutiny, not sparing himself nor seeking excuses, he can never achieve anything, he can never attain to any spiritual height and he can never be a truly good man. The ideal of legalistic righteousness is, indeed, a peril and a menace to the soul. Having discharged the obligations of the letter of the law, the legalist imagines that he has met the demands of righteousness. "Behold! I am righteous," says the legalist, the Pharisee, and thereby damns himself and dooms his soul to perdition. That is why the average man of religion is generally so hard-hearted and mentally so blind. The truth is that one might obey the letter of the law with ever so much punctiliousness, one is bound to remain blind and hard-hearted, unless one resorts to *istighfar*, unless one digs deep below the letter of the law, discovers its spirit and in the light of that spirit examines and scrutinizes one's actions and motives. "Enlightenment is an act of the heart," says the Prophet, and there is no way of keeping the heart pure except through *istighfar*, through frequent and unsparing examination of the self, and close scrutiny of one's actions and

THE MAN

motives and intentions. *Istighfar* is the only means of obtaining enlightenment and making spiritual progress and there is none other. This was the grand secret of Muhammad's greatness and he holds it open to those who would follow him.

It was *istighfar* that had endowed his mind with such heroic powers of endurance and self-command. For thirteen long years at Mecca he met disappointments. Yet his faith and courage remained unshaken. He knew no despair. Like the evergreen date-palms of his desert home his heart was ever fresh with hope and faith. Defeat did not dishearten him nor victory made him vain and exulting. In the hour of sorrow and affliction he is a god-like hero, and in the hour of victory and triumph—that hour of severest trial for successful men—the spirit of deepest humility overcomes him. “When there comes the help of Allah and the victory and thou seest men entering the religion of Allah in legions, then celebrate the praise of thy Lord and ask His protection; surely He is oft-returning to mercy” (CX). Muhammad (ﷺ) was the master of defeat and

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

victory and not the toy of circumstance.

Greatness is of many kinds. One owes his greatness to his tailor's art, another to his cook, a third to his banker, a fourth to the kindness of a viceroy or a king and a fifth to his general capacity for fraud. Big in persons, possessions and titles and frightfully small in their souls, they expect the world to bow and scrape before them and make itself humble and abject. The religious *Pir* or *Khalifa* is not happy unless his followers touch his knees and feet, make deep obeisances before him and call him "His Holiness". From the lowly state of an orphan, Muhammad (ﷺ) had risen to be the mighty Emperor of Arabia, mightier than any earthly potentate because he commanded the hearts of his people. Yet he refused to assume any marks of external distinction. We see him sitting with his blessed companions in the mosque at Medina—the report is from Bukhari. Presently a traveller arrives and alights from his camel in the mosque. He has come to speak with the Prophet and looks from one to the other of the people. They are all sitting like familiar friends of equal degree without any

THE MAN

circumstance to mark out the leader. Puzzled he asks at last : " Which of you is Muhammad ? " In answer they point to the man " with the blessed face ". The Prophet was far too great in his soul to need any external pomp and circumstance or compel his people to sit below him for personal distinction

Pathos is the great virtue of degenerate races and buckets of tears have been shed by writers in this country over the fact that the Prophet worked with his own hands and shared the labours of the ladies of his household and of his followers without. More modern writers tell us that he was trying to teach the dignity of labour to his followers by so doing. The thought would have never occurred to an Arab because no shame attached to manual labour in their eyes as it does in the eyes of the degenerate Indian Musalman. No doubt, the Prophet's example is a standing protest against the vulgar snobbery of obscene-looking fat men who stand aside with their hands in their pockets while others do the hard work. But he was certainly not attitudinizing for the admiration of posterity or his immediate followers. He

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

worked because his own exuberant manhood would not let him sit still while others worked. Exuberant manhood when he was already beyond fifty? Yes, because the man who has disciplined his mind and body as the Prophet had done his takes much longer to grow old, if indeed he ever does. Through *istighfar* he had fixed his personality and realized his Self, and the realization of the Self releases energies undreamed of by other men. The reporters of *Hadis* tell us that after his advent he became endowed with the energy of fifty men. Before his advent he was a dreamy man who had not achieved much distinction among his fellow townsmen, but with his advent as prophet a flood of energy breaks forth and we see him working tirelessly and ceaselessly for twenty-three years. He had become possessed, in the German idiom, with demoniacal powers, he was a hundred-horsepower man as an American has put it. It was the same superabundant energy which would not let him sit still and made him take his share in the labours of building the mosque or digging the ditch around Medina or fetching faggots while others prepared to cook

THE MAN

the meals. That inexhaustible spring of energy had come to him through *istighfar* and severe discipline of the self, and is available to all those who would walk in his footsteps.

Being great in his own inner self, Muhammad (ﷺ) did not feel himself demeaned or humbled by putting his hand to lowly labours, because it is not the lowliness of labour but the meanness of the spirit, the pettiness of the soul, that makes one humble. Nor did he feel the least bit ashamed to associate with the humblest and lowliest of men on terms of perfect equality. He was unfailing in his courtesy, he met everyone with a smiling face, he was the first to offer his hand and the last to withdraw it, and he charmed all who came into contact with him with the refinement of his manners and the sweetness of his speech.

Religious men are generally stern in their manner and forbidding in presence. But it was different with the Holy Prophet. He enjoyed laughter like every warm-blooded man and could make refined jokes himself. Often he saved the faces of others with a timely laugh. A man was accused of having said his prayers

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

without making ablutions. The man pleaded it was too cold and he was afraid of catching a chill. The excuse was silly, but the Prophet covered it up with a laugh. The Prophet was fond of children and loved to stroke their little cheeks and greet them with affection when he met them in the streets. And they came to him with confidence. Of course, he had his little jokes with them, for he was not the man of blood and iron as Christians love to paint him. One little boy at Medina seems to have been a frequent visitor. The Prophet had bestowed on him a pleasant nickname far beyond his years. The boy loved his toys and pets and the Prophet would ask him about them like a confident friend. The Prophet once jocularly spued water from his mouth at a five-year old boy and the latter carried the loving memory of that loving pleasantry in his mind as long as he lived. He spoke of it in his old age with fondness and others remembered it as a mark of honour. The Prophet loved to carry little babies in his arms. Sometimes they would wet his clothes, but he did not mind. The Prophet loved his own children very tenderly. He

THE MAN

would carry Umama, his grand-daughter by Lady Zainab, while he said his prayers. He would put down the child when he went down in prostration and would pick her up again on rising. One day he went to visit his daughter Lady Fatima and learnt that her husband Ali had quarrelled with her and gone away. The Prophet went to look for him and found him lying asleep in the mosque. It tickled the Prophet's fancy to see him covered all over with dust and he called out: "Get up, Abu Turab! Get up, Abu Turab!" And the epithet, which means the father of dust, sticks to the name of Ali to this day as a title of high honour, because it was bestowed by the beloved Prophet. The incident shows the old father, anxious for the happiness of his daughter, trying to please his son-in-law as all fathers do, and restoring good humour with a timely joke. The incidents I am narrating are small, of no great importance in themselves, and were handed down by the compilers of *Hadis* for a wholly different end. But they show up the deep humanity of the man. They make him dear to us because he comes so near to us, so near, indeed, that each one of us

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

can take him for a personal friend.

The Prophet was utterly frank in his speeches and would not take advantage even of the ignorance of others. On the day Ibrahim, the son of his old age, died there was an eclipse of the sun. People thought the sun had gone into mourning over the death of the Prophet's son. It was a fine opportunity for an impostor to let the people remain in their superstitious belief and think of him as a very superior being. But the Prophet would have none of it ; he did not care to have their respect or faith in him if it rested on a false foundation and told them plainly that the sun and the moon had nothing to do with the birth or death of any man. "I am only a man like unto you," he said once, "and I forget just as you forget. Therefore remind me when I forget."

The Prophet had a very refined taste, as all great men have, who have cultivated their minds. His refined sense could not bear strong smells and he once declared that when a person had eaten garlic or onions he should keep away from the mosque and say his prayers at home, for nobody had a right to make himself a

THE MAN

nuisance to others. And once he turned away a dish because it contained onions. Lovers of onions would smile at the Prophet's antipathy towards the spicy vegetable, but it affords us a glimpse of the sheer humanity of the man with all his affections and antipathies as well as his scrupulous regard for the comfort of others even in small things, for who can deny that when an onion-eater appears in society he does make himself a nuisance to his fellows.

Ans bin Malik was a very young boy when he entered the Prophet's household as a page and had unusual opportunities of observing the Holy Prophet's personal habits and manners. "Ten years I waited upon the Holy Prophet," he says, "and he never once spoke harshly to me." One day the aged Master, who was the ruler of Medina, and the little servant were invited out to dinner and the two ate out of the same dish. Presently Ans noticed that the Holy Prophet was fishing for pieces of pumpkin in the soup! This innocent preference for the humble pumpkin again shows his kinship with us in sheer humanity. He had his likes and dislikes in the matter of food like any of

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

us, and it is these traits of his character which bring him so near to us and make him so dear. "Since that day I too love pumpkins," in the memory of the beloved Master, Ans declared in later years.

Ans has another story to tell. One day one of the Holy Prophet's wives sent him a dish of dates by Ans. The Prophet was at the house of Lady Aysha who flared up with jealousy and dashed the bowl to the ground. The boy stood frightened in one corner. Lady Aysha herself sat down speechless at the sight of what she had done. The Holy Prophet's chivalrous forbearance saved the situation. "Thy mother became jealous," he said to Ans to save the Lady's face, picked up the dates from the floor one by one with his own hands and asked Aysha to give her own bowl to replace the one she had broken. Another man would have packed the wife off to her father's house for such an outburst of temper, but the Holy Prophet by his forbearance taught her a lesson which she could never forget, and taught a lesson to us also as to how such rubs in domestic life can be smoothed out.

THE MAN

Numerous instances could be quoted of his regard for the comfort of others. His speeches and sermons were as a rule brief, from fear lest he should make himself a nuisance and the good thing he was offering them should become burdensome. "Don't let religion become a burden to others. The man who leads the prayers should make them short, because there might be in his congregation those who are sick or infirm or those who have business engagements." He would be leading the prayers when suddenly the cry of a babe would fall upon his ears. He would immediately shorten his prayers from fear lest the mother's heart should be in pain; for women joined the congregation for prayers in those days. Indeed, the Prophet had a touching regard for motherhood, even when the mother happened to be an animal. Once a cat gave birth to her kittens in the mosque. The people were annoyed at her soiling the sacred place and wanted to drive her away. But the Prophet forbade them and said, "Respect the cat, for she has only fulfilled the law of her Lord."

A hundred examples could be quoted of the

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

Prophet's sense of gratitude, but I would confine myself to a few only. And the few must be those which are generally called small and which one is likely to overlook. It appears as if nothing escaped the Prophet's notice. A black woman used to sweep the mosque. She died and the Prophet noticed her absence. He made inquiries and learnt of her death. "Why did you not tell me of her death before," he complained to his companions. Then he went and said prayers over her grave. The Prophet was in the latrine one day when a young boy, Ibn Abbas by name, who was aware of the Prophet's habits of scrupulous cleanliness, fetched water and placed it at a convenient place. The Prophet used the water and inquired who had put it there. On being informed he prayed for Ibn Abbas. He would not overlook any courtesy or take it for granted, nor let any kindness, however small, go unacknowledged. He was above sixty when he met his foster-sister Shaima on the field of Honain after an interval of fifty-six years. He stood up to show her respect, spread his mantle on the ground for her to sit upon and offered to carry her home to

THE MAN

Medina where she could live in comfort and honour. And the enemy appealed to him in the name of that foster-relationship and said a woman of their clan had nursed him in his infancy. Six thousand prisoners were released that day without ransom and were dismissed each with a gift of clothes. Muhammad (ﷺ) was not the man to let any kindness go unrewarded.

One could go on relating to any length instances of the Prophet's many virtues, of his heroism and endurance, of his forbearance and self-command, of his chivalry and generosity, of his kindness and sympathy and mercy towards men and animals, of his sense of justice, of his unfailing courtesy and regard for others. But the few examples quoted above will, I hope, suffice to give one an insight into the character of the Prophet. It is not without reason that the Musalman loves the Holy Prophet so much and is prepared to go to any length to maintain his honour. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him.

HIS WORK

CHAPTER IV

HIS WORK

We have learnt that God Almighty had chosen the Arab race for the work of world-regeneration because they were the best raw material for the purpose, and that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was sent to train and discipline the race for that great work. We have also learnt the spirit of the Prophet's teaching and the example of high conduct he set before his followers. Now we have to see the result of his arduous labours.

In brief, the work before the Prophet was twofold : (1) purification, training and discipline of the individual and inspiring him with a high ideal, and (2) national unification.

I have already pointed out the great virtues of the Arab, his manliness, his bravery and courage, his daring in the face of danger and his chivalry towards women and those who asked his protection, his sound commonsense, his clear

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

vision and intellectual perspicacity, and his extraordinary sense of loyalty towards the political unit of which he was a member, namely, his clan. But there were also some defects in his character. All those defects may be summed up in one word : absence of a national purpose.

Have you ever considered what the absence of a national ideal means to the individual ? It blights his character and saps his faculties. It ruins his powers, undermines his manhood, weakens his intellect, takes away his sight and destroys his moral stamina. Ease and luxury and all the vices that spring from them follow without check. For want of a national purpose eating and drinking and amusement and pleasure and women and amassing of wealth become the sole concern of the individual. Men and women do not remain very different from common animals in such a state of society. You don't have to go far to know the evils which follow from having no national purpose. Look at your own home—India. The Indian Musalman has no national ideal. The attainment of dominion status by entering into a pact with the Hindus is not what one might call a national ideal. It

HIS WORK

only means perpetuation of slavery. Also the ideal is not ours; it is a Hindu ideal. A pact with the Hindus is no national ideal. It only means another slavery, slavery to a slavish people, which is worse than any other form of slavery. It only means opening our ranks for free exploitation by the capitalistic Hindu, one of whose national ideals it is to exploit the Musalmans, reduce them to poverty and bring them down to the status of the untouchables.

And because the Indian Musalmans have no national ideal, what have they come to? There are men among us who are willing to sell the whole community for posts and titles, and they are doing it every day. Leaders do crop up among us now and then, but they do so only to exploit the community for their own private ends. Some of them, by riding upon the shoulders of the community, get into Government employment and become political turncoats. Others fall out and come to fisticuffs amongst themselves over questions of personal prestige and precedence or over the division of "spoils"—the public funds. Why is it that no Tilak, no Gandhi, no Malaviya and no

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

Das rise among us? They don't, because the leaders and the led are both blind ; not one of them knows what constitutes their national good. 'Tanzim, Tanzim!' they cry. But why *Tanzim*, what for is the community to be united and organized, when there is no national object before us ? As there is no national purpose, no *Tanzim* or unity comes into being, nor indeed it can. Muslims of India were once known for their mutual sympathy and fellow-feeling. But to-day the brotherhood of the Muslims is but an empty name. We talk of sympathy but have none in our hearts. We appeal to our fellows in the names of God, Muhammad (ﷺ) and Islam, and in the end we cheat them. As a community we have lost all credit in the commercial market. The religious teacher who ought to be our leader and guide in life eats the bread of dishonour and obtains his sustenance by means which no self-respecting man will care to adopt. We live for the day and behave as if tomorrow's sun will not rise. We are not even looking to the well-being and prosperity of our own future generations. We live for the day and spend our energies in amassing wealth by

HIS WORK

hook or crook in order to spend it on our food and drink, on our personal pleasures, personal luxuries and personal aggrandisement, supremely unaware that there is such a thing as a nation. We used to be proud of the honour and purity of our women, but I ask you to look into your hearts and look around you and answer : Are we now justified in having that pride, can we say with truth that the daughters are as chaste and pure and honourable as their mothers were before them, and are our young men as clean and pure and honourable as they used to be ? There was a day when the honour of a Musalman, man or woman, in business or personal relations, was above question. Can you say that it is the same to-day ? Canker has entered into our hearts and we are going down the slippery slope of perdition at an awful pace.

All these evils spring from one basic disease, *viz.*, the absence of a national purpose that should give meaning and direction to the life of the individual. If the Musalmans of India get the inspiration of a national purpose, if they make a firm resolve to-day that the Empire of India shall be theirs tomorrow or the day after and set

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

themselves resolutely to achieve that high ideal, all their ailments would disappear and they would become severally and collectively a mighty people. But mine is a cry in the wilderness.

And as it is with the Indian Musalman to-day, so was it with the pre-Islamic Arab, though he had the advantage of having no foreign yoke upon his neck, as we have the advantage over him of education and a good religion. Having no national purpose, the Arab cared for his own personal pleasures. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die, seems to have been the principle of Arab life, because there was no hereafter for the individual or for the race. It was an epicurian society organized on a basis of gross and selfish capitalism, in which wealth and power reigned supreme. There was no government in the land, no law and no authority to administer justice, keep the wrong-doer in leash, or protect the poor and the weak. As personal pleasure was the chief motive of life, they robbed and plundered one another in order to procure the means of obtaining those pleasures. Robbery and theft

HIS WORK

had, therefore, come to be recognized as legitimate means of livelihood and no stigma of immorality attached to them. Their religion, whatever it was, sat very lightly upon them and they cared for their gods and national sanctuaries only because they provided occasions for profit and pleasure. The Quraish, as Wellhausen remarks, had very astutely turned the waters of national wealth into their own channels by means of the annual pilgrimage and were attached to the gods of the Kaaba for this very reason and none other. The chief of a tribe once went to consult the arrows of Hubal in the Kaaba about his undertaking to avenge the murder of his father. As he received the negative reply over and over again, he threw the arrows in the face of the idol and said, "Wretch! You wouldn't be answering no if it were your father." That much was the respect and love the Arab had for his gods.

The work of the Holy Prophet consisted in inspiring the race with an earnest purpose of national and individual life. He undertook to chasten and discipline them for the realization of that purpose, for which he had been raised

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

as Prophet and to which the destiny of the race had called it.

Two forces worked for the regeneration of Arab society, the Prophet's life-giving utterances illustrated and reinforced by the compelling example of his conduct, and the magnetism of his own personality. His words inspired them; his indomitable courage filled them with hope and enthusiasm; his charm of manner and sweetness of disposition turned foes into friends; his spiritual grandeur drew men towards him and made them willing pupils; his example was infectious and he was with them all the time to guide them into the straight and narrow path by gentle persuasion and remonstrance. He sympathised with them in their weaknesses and with a gentle word here and firm counsel there he pointed out their errors to them and led them along the path which he had chosen for them.

The grand conception of the Unseen Lord of the universe swept away the whole cobweb of ancient superstitions with one stroke. For, once you have grasped the idea of divine unity, you cannot go back to the worship of idols and false divinities. Then he teaches them the

HIS WORK

idea of personal responsibility for one's actions. Behold, the Lord sees you at all times. He sees what you do openly and what you do in hiding. He knows the inmost secrets of your hearts, and one day you will have to appear before Him to render an account of what you did or left undone. Fear that day, because the accounting will be severe. He institutes prayer for personal purification and constant remembrance of God, an hourly reminder that the Lord, though all mercy and compassion for His erring humanity, is yet severe in taking accounts, and He demands purity of heart and conduct instead of lip-professions. The Teacher goes on to say that prayer is not enough, that it is a means and not an end in itself, the end being that you serve your fellow beings and desist from injuring them. He inculcates in them a humanitarian regard for the poor and the weak, the orphan and the widow, the wayfarer far from home and kindred and the helpless slave. "Hast thou seen the man who gives the lie to his faith? It is the man who treats the orphan with harshness and will not have the poor fed." Besides the doctrine of unity, the fears of the

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

hereafter and the folly of worshipping idols, the most burning passages in the early Meccan revelations are those which contain scathing denunciations of the fat money-pots of Mecca, the gross capitalists who, swollen with the pride of wealth and power, despised the poor and treated the weak and the needy with harshness and contempt. "You cannot attain to righteousness," they were told, "unless you spend in the way of the Lord of that which you love," unless you are prepared to sacrifice your personal pleasures and selfish ambitions and unless you are willing to devote your energies and your wealth to the well-being of the whole, "sincerely and for the love of God alone," free from the taint of selfish motives and desire for personal gain. Not leaving it to personal inclination alone, the Teacher laid an obligatory tax, the Zakat, on all well-to-do men for the benefit of the poor in the community. Moved by this teaching, men like Abu Bakr gave away whole fortunes to free slaves and to serve the young commonwealth of Islam.

It must be remembered, however, that the Prophet was not a communistic revolutionary.

HIS WORK

He instituted Zakat, abolished usury and ordered the distribution of property among the heirs on an equitable basis, thus preventing the accumulation of those large hoards in the hands of a few individuals, which become a menace to the peace of society on one side and are a curse and a source of moral debasement to their possessors on the other. He denounced indolence and beggary just as forcibly and taught that "beggars would rise without flesh on their faces in the hereafter," a very apt way of describing the punishment, by the way, because those whose faces do not blush with the shame of begging deserve to have no flesh on their faces at all. What he did mean by his burning denunciations of the impudence and selfish greed of the money-pots of Mecca was the fact, which wealthy men so often forget, that the prosperity of individuals depends upon the general prosperity of the country and the community, that 'the strength of the pack is the wolf and the strength of the wolf is the pack,' and that prosperity is a social process and not the concern of individuals alone. If the community at large remains poor, its wealthy

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

cannot become very wealthy, and whatever they amass they soon lose through forces over which individuals have no control. The principle of collective wealth and prosperity, then new to the world, is now a recognized principle of economics, and we have seen it applied on a large scale in our own day when America lends large sums to Germany and proclaims a moratorium, and when America, England and France do their utmost to strengthen the credit of Germany, Austria, the Balkan States and Poland and extend a helping hand even to Russia. They do so, not from charity, but from sheer personal interest, because they know that a prosperous Central Europe means so many orders to their own producers and manufacturers. Sound economic charity, such as the Prophet instituted, works both ways. They realised the truth of his teaching when Arabia at last submitted to his system and became wealthier than she had ever been before.

The Prophet's methods of reform were always radical, for he desired to transform the very hearts of men. With this end in view he established the institution of fasting. Fasting is

HIS WORK

of course known to all religions. Among the Jews it was a sign of mourning and remorse, and the same significance was retained in Christianity, as witnessed by a saying of Jesus who said his followers would fast when the bridegroom was gone. Among the Hindus it was a form of personal mortification and was resorted to to wring special spiritual powers or favours from heaven. As a political weapon to be used against the Government or as a form of protest against a party not in his good books, it is purely an invention of Mr. Gandhi. Though thoroughly cowardly and thoroughly foolish, it serves its purpose and brings him into the lime light. Fasting was not regulated before Islam. Among the Jews certain days in the year, few and far between, were set aside for fasting and repentance. The Roman Catholics fast during Easter, but eat everything except meat and consider it a great hardship. The Hindus, too, have a few solitary fasts, but are allowed the use of a large variety of fruits and drinks and need not starve. In fact, fasting may be taken for a purely Islamic institution and has come to be looked upon as such by all. The discipline is

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

rigorous. You must not eat and you must not drink anything whatever, you cannot even smoke while you are fasting, and so on day after day for a whole month. Non-Muslim critics tell us that fasting impairs one's health permanently. Well, it has not done so with the Muslims. The Muslims themselves say that fasting was instituted for reasons of health. I am quite aware that fasting is sometimes prescribed as a remedy against certain ailments, especially those which arise from overfeeding. But if that was the purpose, there was no reason to set a whole month aside for it during the year. A few days now and then would have done better. All these difficulties in understanding the true purpose of fasting arise from the fact that we bring in our own interpretations in the face of the express words of the Quran which says that fasting is prescribed in order to make men guard against evil. That purpose could not have been served if fasting had been ordained only for a day or two at a time. Any one can fast for a day or two without feeling the least inconvenience. But it tries one's patience and endurance and serves its purpose fully when one has to

HIS WORK

battle against hunger and thirst day after day for one whole month. It is a mighty discipline for the soul, for it trains us in habits of self-control and teaches us to command our appetites and desires and passions. And the man who can command his appetites and passions is a man indeed; he is a king among men, a superman. The discipline is repeated year after year. On the other hand, if a man does not realise this purpose, his fasting is but starving. But it does work, even unconsciously, for the politicals who have been to jail tell us that the behaviour of Muslim prisoners was always more dignified and patient than that of their Hindu fellow prisoners. The Arabs not only learnt by these means to control their appetites and pleasures, but also their sorrows, and it was declared that the man who beat his face or tore his hair at the death of any relation was an ignorant man, not deserving the name of a Muslim. But the Prophet was a humane man and not a stone-hearted stoic, for on two occasions his own eyes welled with tears, once on the death of an infant grandson and once when two little orphan girls ran into his arms when he had gone to announce their

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

father's death to their mother. Questioned about his tears on the former occasion, he said it was mercy God had implanted in the heart of man, and no mercy shall be shown to the hard-hearted man on the day of reckoning, who has no mercy in his own nature.

Arabia is a poor country ; living was hard in those days and it cost the Prophet much labour to ween men from habits of greed and cupidity. The Emigrants at Medina had suffered much want during earlier years and the Prophet was always anxious to do something for them. There arrived once a very large sum in taxes from Bahrein. The Prophet told them to put it in the mosque. He came to say his prayers a little while later. He did not even look at the heap of riches, the reporter tells us, and went straight to prayers. After he had finished the prayers he sat down by the heap and told every man to carry away as much as he wanted. His uncle Abbas showed great covetousness on the occasion and carried away as much as he could carry. The Prophet continued looking at him in amazement as he went. That look must have gone deeper into the hearts of the beholders than

HIS WORK

any spoken words could. When the whole heap was gone, the Prophet shook the cloth and went home—empty-handed!

It must not be imagined from this that the Prophet had made an idol of poverty or looked upon wealth as a snare of the devil. He regarded poverty as a social disease which must be fought and wealth as a good which was to be used for oneself and one's kindred, then for the poor of the community and in the service of the nation. Nor was he a believer in the suppression of the body and its desires. There is no asceticism in Islam, he taught, and the body has its claims as much as the soul. Prohibitions in the Quran are few and by the time they were proclaimed—at Medina,—the Muslims under the discipline of the Prophet had grown out of them and felt no hardship whatever. And the prohibitions are of the most reasonable kind. Everything clean and good is permitted, if it is clean and good. Everything, indeed, which goes to make for a rich and abundant life is permitted. Only, in the system laid down by Muhammad (ﷺ), you cannot desire a rich and abundant life for yourself alone without desiring it for

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

others as well.

Once the Arabs had caught the spirit of the Prophet's message, they became very desirous to learn. Men came from all over the country to learn the teachings of the faith direct from him. Men and women gathered round him and questioned him with uttermost freedom. A whole nation was at school, and the teacher was not tired. He never showed the least impatience, although the barbarous folk, especially those of the desert who had not come under his discipline before, behaved ignorantly at times.

There was one feature in the manner of his teaching which seems to be peculiar to him. The nearness of great men is not always an unmixed blessing. Men, small in their souls, who owe their greatness to external circumstances, make you bow and scrape and are not happy unless you make yourself thoroughly humble before them. Even when a man is really great and does not desire to make others feel humble before him, his moral stature, rising high above his fellows, acts depressingly at times upon their spirits and makes them feel small and abject in his presence. We all know the attitude of

HIS WORK

the disciples of Jesus and Buddha towards their masters. But it was different with the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). In his spiritual altitude he stood mountains high above his fellows; yet he never let the weight of his personality press upon them. He talked with them and walked with them, mixed with them and sat with them with perfect freedom, as if there was no difference at all. He was far too great in his own soul to posture and attitudinize for others or try to impress them with his own superiority. He had come to ennoble them and make them great, not small and abject, and in that work he immersed his entire personality. His greatness was that he forgot his greatness and made others forget it when he dealt with them as their leader and master. Men of lowliest stations came to him, slaves who had been sold and re-sold several times, and became great and honoured men when they had sat with him for a time. The Arabs had been a barbarous folk before the Prophet. The minor details of social etiquette and decency which we find in the Quran and the *Hadis* point to a very uncultured state of society. Yet these very men, whose

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

bodies used to stink with perspiration in the mosque at Medina as Omar the Great informs us, became the rulers of provinces and empires and commanders of victorious armies and behaved all the while as if they had been born to the purple. Indeed, the self-command, the moderation, the magnanimity, the prudence and high wisdom exhibited by the Arab conquerors in the East or the West is a most eloquent testimony to the excellence and efficiency of the Prophet's teaching and discipline and personal example.

The spirit of self-command, self-denial, social service and fellow-feeling inculcated by the Prophet and the ever-working magnetism of his personality went far to pave the way for national unification. Distinctions of birth and fortune were abolished, and it was declared a mark of ignorance, which signified the darkness of unbelief in the terminology of early Islam, to stigmatize any one with the lowliness of his parentage. All were declared equal in the sight of God and in the law of Islam. Only one distinction was kept, the sole mark of Islamic aristocracy, *viz.*, worth and virtue. "The most

HIS WORK

honourable among you in the sight of God are those who are the most virtuous." Those who entered the fold of Islam "lost their caste" as it were and became members of the new republic with equal rights and privileges. The family expanded till it covered the whole land and the Arabs automatically became one nation.

One reform, small in name but of great national moment, requires to be mentioned. The right of private vengeance, or blood feuds, was a perpetual cause of Arab warfare, and so long as the right stood, no nation could come into being. Pending feuds the Holy Prophet simply suppressed by a fiat and told the people that the nation could not go back to the Days of Ignorance. For the future, he took away the right of private vengeance from the tribes and vested it in the state, thereby turning vengeance into punishment and taking away the fangs of the hound of tribalism. In the same speech he declared that the lives, properties and the honour of Musalmans were sacred and inviolate among them.

A nation was thus born. But it was a very strange nation, quite different from others

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

on the earth. It was not united *against* all the world like them, but *for* all the world. The Prophet had inspired his people with a great ideal which was nothing short of the regeneration of the whole world. Every individual who had come under the spell of Muhammad's personality and had had a taste of his teaching and discipline felt that he had a high purpose before him. The whole nation had become conscious of its high destiny. It is a small way to judge of the Prophet's work by the disappearance of petty vices from Arab society as the result of his teaching. They could not stay in the society he had founded. His work should be judged rather by the great things his people did, and subsequent history shows that the Prophet had done his work thoroughly and well. Both in its kind and its magnitude it was unique in the history of the world. His work shows that Muhammad was the greatest man the world has ever seen. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

CHAPTER V

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

Woman is the centre of domestic life and the mother of the race, and no religious teacher worth his salt can afford to ignore her position in society. On her status and the degree of respect we show her depend the happiness of the home and the moral health of the race. We cannot produce good and great men unless and until we learn to revere motherhood.

In a previous chapter I have noted the position woman occupied under the old dualistic faiths. With their notions of the antagonism of matter and spirit, asceticism and celibacy, they had reduced her status to that of a mere dependant and a chattel, an evil necessity and a snare which it were best to avoid. Others had gone to the opposite extreme of utter licence and thought that it did not matter how they used woman because she was just nothing. In his protest against the celibacy of the Roman

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

clergy, Luther said :

Wer liebt nicht Wein, Weib, Gesang,
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Lebelang.
[Who loves not wine, woman and song
Remains a fool all his lifelong.]

But the protest does not raise the status of woman very high, for by association with wine and song she only becomes an instrument of men's enjoyment and pleasure. In any case, that remained the attitude of the European mind towards woman, whether under Luther or Calvin or the Pope, the only difference being whether she was to be enjoyed or avoided.

The Prophet of Islam, with his very exalted conception of the unity of God and nature, did away with the idea of the antagonism of matter and spirit, abolished asceticism and celibacy, exalted the status of woman and assigned her her true and natural place in society. He recognised her as a free citizen in her own right to inherit and hold property, engage in business on her own account, take part in the councils of the state, hold any high position in the administration of the country and marry and divorce on equal terms with man. He recognis-

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

ed her as an independent individual in her own being and not the shadow of her husband to be absorbed in his essence after death as in Hinduism. And, instead of holding matrimony for an evil necessity like St. Paul, he made it obligatory upon all.

“The best among you are those,” the Prophet declared, “who are best to their wives and children.” Honour womanhood, he said, for “Paradise lies under the feet of mothers.” “Three things God has created most precious,” he said on another occasion, “they are perfumes, woman and prayer.” What a difference between Luther and Muhammad (ﷺ)! It is the distance of a whole world. One associates her with wine and song and the other with nature’s finest and choicest gift – perfumes, and with prayer. Perfumes allay and assuage; prayer exalts and edifies, and woman shares these functions with the two. “One of the greatest blessings of God on earth is a virtuous wife,” the Holy Prophet said. “They (women) are garments for you and you are garments for them,” says the Holy Quran (II, 187).

The single man is naked and defenceless

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

and the single woman is naked and defenceless. Woman is a covering for man's shame as he is of hers. Woman is the shield and protection of his honour as he is of hers. Their association is necessary for the protection of each other's honour. "And one of His signs is," says the Holy Quran (XXX, 21), "that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find comfort and peace in them and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for those who reflect." Certainly, it is a most glorious sign of the existence of God and His mercy. Peace and comfort and quiet and calmness of mind, and love and compassion! Note the two sentiments 'love and compassion' mentioned together. A truer conception cannot be imagined of the mutual relations of a loving husband and a loving wife—a husband and a wife who have chastened themselves and have purified their hearts of the ugliness of baser passions, and not the common animals who mate together from sheer animal necessity and call themselves husbands and wives. Such is the exalted conception of married life in Islam, a description

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

as well as an ideal for every Muslim to strive for. What a distance between the New Testament and the Quran, the former holding connection with woman to be defiling and the latter to be so purifying !

In fact, the Holy Prophet believed that the love of man and woman was necessary to the moral purification and spiritual advancement of the two. There was a young man at Medina, Jabir bin Abdullah by name, in whom the Prophet saw much good. The young man had lost his father at the battle of Ohud, and in view of his orphaned state and of his personal excellence the Holy Prophet took keen interest in his doings and personally attended to the straightening up of his affairs after his father's death. On one occasion, when they were returning from an expedition and Jabir's camel would not walk fast enough, the Prophet offered to drive it for him. The Prophet was great in his own self and could enter into such easy familiarity with any one and do any humble labour without falling in dignity. So he took a stick and drove the animal, while the young man rode on its back. As they rode side by side,

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

the Prophet offered to purchase the camel. The young man accepted the offer, the price was agreed upon and payment and delivery was postponed till their arrival at Medina. Presently the Prophet said, "I hear, my son, you have married." "Yes, Your Majesty, I have," the young man replied. "Was it a widow or a maiden?" the Prophet asked. "A widow, Your Majesty." "Why, you ought to have married a maiden. She would have played with you and you would have played with her."* Remember, it was not a common man of the streets, but a teacher of the purest morals and highest virtues who was speaking. He said so, because the play of a loving young man and a loving young woman has something holy and

* I had better complete the story for the benefit of those who have not heard of it. In reply, Jabir explained that he had sisters who were very young and wanted a mother to look after them, and it was for their benefit that he had sought a woman of experience in marriage. The sacrifice and the kindly thought of the elder brother for his little sisters went to the Prophet's heart, who blessed him then and there and prayed for him. On arrival at Medina he paid the camel's price and let him keep the camel as well. He could not let the young man's sacrifice go unappreciated.

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

elevating in it, which is known only to the clean and the pure-minded. The saying reminds me of Nietzsche who says in *Also sprach Zarathustra* :

“ Let woman be a toy, pure and fine, like unto the diamond, resplendent with the virtues of a world which is not yet there.

“ In the real man is hidden a child who wants to play. Up ye women ! and discover me the child in man.”

The greatest English authority on Sexual Science, Havelock Ellis, says somewhere that the only teacher who faced the problem of the sexes honestly and squarely was the Prophet of Islam. It is, therefore, well to learn what he thought of sexual intercourse. Men and women have wholly opposite feelings in matters of sex, and I always thought that sexual intercourse must be an humiliation and an indignity to a woman. Of course, in my mind there is always the refined and clean-minded woman and not the common hussy. The American poetess Ella Wheeler Wilcox has expressed the same sentiment in one of her poems. I questioned a great woman about it, a woman of the chastest and most refined

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

sentiments with a mind trained for systematic thought. After much hesitation and a close analysis of her own mind she confessed there was, and that a woman would certainly feel it strongly if she did not love her husband or the connection took place without her consent and mental co-operation. Then I told her what the Holy Prophet had said. "When one of you goes to his wife, he should say, 'In the name of Allah' and should pray, 'O God, protect us from the devil, and protect him or her from the devil, whom Thou shalt grant us.' When they have a child, it shall remain safe from the devil." "Oh, what a difference it makes!" the lady cried. All the difference in the world, indeed! Prayer for protection from the devil at the moment of cohabitation shows how sacred the connection was in his eyes and what a noble and pure ideal of marital relationship he was setting before his people. Protection from the devil at the moment of cohabitation means that the connection should take place with a pure mind and not for mere enjoyment of the flesh. It should take place from purest love, free from the alloy of baser passion which is a wholly

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

different thing.

The Prophet had his own ideal of female beauty which is indicated by the expression **حور عین**—the white-eyed beauties of paradise. The Quran paints glorious pictures of the pleasures and joys of paradise, but they are drawn in such a pure manner that only a very lewd person will see anything offensive in them. Also, it is not a small compliment to womanhood that beautiful women should be set up as the highest reward of human endeavour, as something that men should battle and strive for.

Now one of the blessings of paradise, with which the righteous are to be rewarded, is the company of women who are described in the Quran as white-eyed beauties, pure as pearls (LVI, 23), 'who restrain their eyes' (LV, 56). Hindu thinkers on sexual science have classified women into four groups. The highest among them is Padmani who feels the desire for sexual intercourse only once in her life and is otherwise cool and calm and collected and mistress of herself, unmoved by any gales of passion. The women one comes across in the daily round of life could be easily divided into four classes.

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

There are those ugly ones with sin deeply impressed in their faces, who fill one with horror and repulsion; there are those nondescript ones who just leave one cold; there are others who make a strong appeal to one's baser passions and, lastly, there are those who fill you with a sense of holiness and reverence. One feels to bow down before them and worship them. Not passion but the sentiment of holiness and reverence is it that they inspire one with. Such a type is very rare and I have had the good fortune to see just a few of them. To meet a woman of this description is an experience. They are cool and calm and unmoved. And if you happen to look into their eyes, you will find the white of their eyes very white. The redness of passion is not there. They are pure as pearls and they restrain their eyes, as the Quran puts it. I do not know any purer or nobler ideal of female beauty.

And the Prophet had his own notions about love too. The story is about Moses. After killing an Egyptian he fled to Midian which he reached safely. There he saw some men watering their cattle at a well. He also saw two

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

young maidens holding their cattle back at some distance. Youth and chivalry took him to the girls and he asked them what they were waiting for. They said, their father was a very old man and they had come to water his cattle for him, but could not do so until the men were gone. Moses gallantly offered to water their cattle for them. After he had finished, he went back to the shade of a tree and prayed: "My Lord! surely I stood in need of what good Thou hast sent me." Presently, one of the girls returned "walking bashfully," took him along with her to her father and pleaded on his behalf: "O my father, employ him, surely the best of those whom you can employ is the strong man, the faithful one," (XXVIII, 23—26). Note the words of praise the woman bestows upon the object of her affections. Strong and trusty! The two things which a true woman loves most in a man, and these two things embrace almost the whole of manhood.

Cold-blooded Maulvis have been tearing the Quranic verses from their context in order to escape the dreadful consequence of a prophet falling in love. A prophet in love! How

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

disgraceful! But I must adhere to the text. What was he praying for? For safety? He was safe already. For bread? What a thing to pray for! Besides, there is no mention of bread anywhere near. And why did she walk bashfully? They were not very bashful when Moses spoke to the girls first. In fact, country girls who roam about with their flocks never are bashful and speak to strangers with perfect freedom. She was bashful because she had become self-conscious, because she was in love and was going to meet her lover, her 'strong man and true', for the first time after awakening had come.

But it is to Moses' declaration of love that I desire to draw the reader's attention. Those who have had the experience will remember how deeply humble one feels at the time, humble not to move the lady to compassion and acceptance of your proposal but from the sheer holiness of that rare and wonderful experience. One feels the thing to be altogether too vast to be contained in one single breast and too sweet to be true. Moses was a mighty man, who could hurl a fellow into eternity with one blow

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

of his fist. But with the sudden and sweet awakening of love he realized that something had been lacking to complete his manhood. That something had come and his spirit bowed down in deep obeisance before the Giver of all good. He suddenly finds several hollows and caverns in his heart, of which he was not aware before, but which he now finds filled with a blaze of light, the light of love which was necessary to complete his manhood, and he bows down before the Almighty to return thanks for this great mercy. A nobler or a holier confession of love I have not met with anywhere else.

Such was Muhammad's conception of womanhood and of love for woman. Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!

But the Prophet was not a weak sentimentalist as some modern feminists happen to be, who would exalt woman to such an ethereal height as to make her wholly useless for the race. Woman's sphere of life is limited. Nature herself has delimited it. She can be either a wife or a mother. A third vocation nature has not allotted her. In these two positions she

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

rules supreme. In every other walk of life man can beat her any day. A prodigy of a woman here and a prodigy there only proves the case against her. Woman is entirely a being of love, whereas love occupies but a small part in a man's life ; he has a multitude of other interests. Woman bears the race, whereas man is the bearer of the tradition of the race. He carries the tradition of art, technique, science and civilization as a whole from one generation to another. He is the builder, whereas woman only ministers to the comfort and well-being of the builder. He is the hard-headed thinker and organizer and designer, while she inspires him only with the beauty of the design. "The happiness of man is : I will. The happiness of woman is : He will. Behold, even now has the world become perfect!—Thus thinketh every woman when she with all her love obeyeth." Man is the master, while woman prefers to sink her personality into that of her husband, because it is in that only that she finds her greatest happiness and bliss. Therefore, the Holy Quran plainly recognizes the superiority of man over woman and gives him authority over her

HIS CONCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD

(IV, 34). And the Holy Prophet said that if worship of another than God had been lawful in Islam, he would have commanded women to worship their husbands.

Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon our Muhammad, our friend, our teacher and our exemplar.

APPENDIX

A FEW SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET

1. Worship God as if thou seest Him ; for though thou dost not see Him, know that He seeth thee.

2. A creature is nearest to God at the time of prostration ; therefore pour out your supplications at that time.

3. If thou derive pleasure from the good which thou hast performed and be grieved for the evil which thou hast committed, thou art a true believer.

4. When anything pricks thy conscience, forsake it.

5. Ask the sentence from thy own heart. Goodness is a thing from which thy heart finds firmness and rest, and badness is a thing which throws thee into doubt, although men may acquit.

6. God hath made a straight road and two walls, one on each side of it, in which are doors

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

open, and over them are thrown curtains, and on the top of the road is an admonisher who saith, "Go straight on the road and go not crooked"; and above this admonisher is another who saith, whenever a creature is trying to open these doors, "Open them not ; because if you do, you will fall into them." Verily, the road is Islam ; and the doors which are open are those things which God hath forbidden, and the curtains dropped are the bounds of God, and the admonisher is the Quran, and the upper admonisher is God in the heart of every believer.

7. The farthest man from God is the hard-hearted man.

8. The best of possessions is a prayerful tongue and a grateful heart and the wife of a Muslim, who assists him in faith.

9 Know, O men, that to long for the property of others is a means of poverty and increase of indigence ; and know that to have no dependence on man is affluence and independence, and know that verily man when hoping for nothing is independent of it.

10. Allah says, there are three persons whose enemy I shall be on the Day of Judgment.

